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ABSTRACT

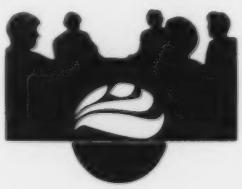
This handbook is part of an ongoing process to share models of Total Catholic Education boards, religious education boards, and Catholic school boards. The purpose of the book is two-fold: (1) to provide a rationale for having a group within the parish that sets the direction for the religious education of children, youth, and adults; and (2) to provide models for the formation and operation of this leadership body. Chapters cover a broad range of topics: group-formation models; roles, relationships, and responsibilities; training; spirituality; adaptations to various cultures; and the rationale for having a religious education board/commission. Following the preface and introduction, the articles include: (1) "The Call To Be a Watercarrier: The Religious Education Board" (Matthew J. Hayes); (2) "A People, a Mission, a Structure!" (John S. Balaguer and Maria Thornton McClain); (3) "The Spirituality of Decision Making" (Mary Benet McKinney, OSB); (4) "Forming a Religious Education Commission--A Team Effort" (Elaine Ouellette); (5) "The Why and How of Forming a Religious Education Board" (Eileen Loughran); (6) "Parish Religious Education Committees--Why Bother with Them?" (James J. DeBoy, Jr.); (7) "What Do Parish Religious Education Boards Do?" (Maureen Kennedy, OP); (8) "A Rainbow of Adaptations" (Maria Thornton McClain); (9) "Professional Growth Day for Parish Catechetical Leaders, re: Religious Education Boards" (Joanne Spizzo Sanders and James P. Studdert); and (10) "An Effective Way for a Pastor and DRE to Support the Board of Education" (Mary Jo Thomas-Day). Appendices contain a sample constitution for a Religious Education Board, a Total Catholic Education Board/Commission, and a Parish Board of Education; a model yearly calendar for meetings; a report form; a list of additional resources; and a sample vision of a parish religious education program. (LMI)

ED 399 610

MAKING COMMISSIONS WORK

A Handbook for Parish Religious Education Boards/Commissions

Edited by Maria Thornton McClain



National Association of Boards of Catholic Education

National Catholic Educational Association

EA 027 842

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Edited by Maria Thornton McClain

National Association of Boards of Catholic Education

National Catholic Educational Association

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Preface

This book is dedicated to the memory of John Balaguer who died in early October, 1994. His tireless work has culminated in this project with Maria McClain.

In 1991, John Balaguer joined the National Association of Boards of Catholic Education Advisory Committee. He was elected as a regional representative from New England. John brought the talents of a businessman, an especially strong faith in Total Catholic Education, the strong will to persevere and his quiet, gentle (but persistent) manner. His goal was to involve and represent all groups in this handbook. When Maria joined him in this pursuit in 1992, this team was on a mission. You hold the results in your hands.

This handbook is part of an ongoing process to share models of Total Catholic Education boards, religious education boards and Catholic school boards. Perhaps you have an adaptation that works well for you. Please, share it with us; we want to share what works with others. This reflects the goals of the National Association of Boards of Catholic Education: strengthening boards with resources, with a voice at the national level, with a network of boards across the country and with workshops.

Please, call us at (202) 337-6232 with more models that work, or if you seek more models. We hope this handbook will inspire many parish leaders to brave the waters to establish and nurture religious education boards/commissions/councils. See what others are doing and learn from their example.

On behalf of the National Association of Boards of Catholic Education Advisory Committee, we wish to express our gratitude to the critic readers of this handbook. They are: Celestin Algero, SC, Chair, Department of Education, Spring Hill College (Mobile, AL); Mary Therese Chmura, CSSF, Associate Superintendent for Religious Education (Buffalo, NY); Janet Kayser, Director of Religious Education, St. Thomas the Apostle (Crystal Lake, IL); Charlotte Sutherland, Regional Representative, National Association of Parish Coordinators/Directors of Religious Education (Bellevue, WA); Father Dennis Trausch, former Chairperson, National Association of Boards of Catholic Education, and present Chaplain, Bergan Mercy Health System (Council Bluffs, IA); Monsignor John Unger, Associate Superintendent of Religious Education (St. Louis, MO).

Making Commissions Work: A Handbook for Parish Religious Education Boards/Commissions was a collaborative project for the National Association of Boards of Education of the National Catholic Educational Association. We would like to thank Robert Colbert, Executive Director, and Barbara Campbell, Associate Executive Director, of the Department of Religious Education, for their support and cooperation on this project.

We would also like to thank Maria Thornton McClain for all her work and perseverance.

Thompson Mason Faller, PhD
Chairperson
National Association of
Boards of Catholic Education

Regina Haney, OSF
Executive Director
National Association of
Boards of Catholic Education

November, 1995

Introduction

The purpose of this book is two-fold: (1) to provide a rationale for having a group within the parish that sets the direction for the religious education of children, youth and adults; (2) to provide models for the formation and operation of this leadership body. The terms board, commission and, sometimes, committee are used throughout the book to accommodate various systems currently in use. We did not intend to exclude other current terms such as council.

This work represents the insights and experience of many individuals who are involved with boards/commissions and religious education programs. We hope it will help a wide range of people, including commission members and those responsible for parish catechetical ministry who are thinking about beginning a religious education board, commission, or committee, or who are working with experienced groups. Chapters cover a broad spectrum of topics: group formation models; roles, relationships and responsibilities; training; spirituality; adaptations to various cultures; and the rationale for having a religious education board/commission.

The question has been asked, "Why not have one model for all religious education commissions?" The reason this route was not chosen is that there is a great diversity in situations in parishes and dioceses throughout the country. Different models will appeal to different needs.

The opening chapter portrays the board as a "watercarrier," while Chapter IV compares forming a commission to learning white-water rafting. Both images help us to understand more fully that the work of a religious education board flows directly from the waters of Baptism. Chapters II and VI explain why the role of these groups is integral to the ministry of catechesis in the parish, yet they rely on different operating systems.

Other chapters contain information about regular, focused and comprehensive training. The Professional Growth Day outlined in Chapter IX will be helpful to both administrators and board members in learning why boards/commissions are important and how they can function effectively. Chapter X illustrates how a religious education administrator and pastor can provide support for the board/commission.

Each chapter shares a common thread. Regardless of the model or structure used, the board or commission is to provide leadership within the parish. In order to do so, it must become a community, its members sharing their faith with each other. Chapter III focuses on a spirituality of "shared wisdom" that facilitates the forming of a single voice among all

pastoral leadership in setting the direction for the catechetical ministry.

Authors present various operating models and Appendices A through D provide sample constitutions that can be used with each one. One model is based on a total Catholic education board. The other assumes a separate board, commission or committee where the parish has or shares a Catholic school. While not the only structures possible, those included will provide enough information to address most situations. Adaptations for cultures where boards or commissions have not been familiar or satisfactory ways of obtaining input from the community can be found in Chapter VIII.

Each governance system for catechetical ministry must have a clear, regular and non-competitive linkage to other ministries in the parish. It must, of course, follow the principles of subsidiarity and collaborative decision-making. This is based on the fact that each ministry is a part of the basic mission of the parish.

Slightly different versions of the role and responsibilities of commissions are found throughout the book, especially in Chapters I, II, V, VI and IX. For those who are ready to reap the benefits of sharing the responsibility for catechetical ministry with the whole community, Chapters IV and V provide a process for forming a board/commission. Chapter VII demonstrates how to conduct productive regular meetings and how to plan for the future. The voice of experience reminds the reader that these groups need ongoing, planned nurturing. Failure to do so can cause frustration and behavior that is destructive to the community and catechetical ministry. Readers will find many suggestions for regular board in-service throughout the book, covering a variety of topics.

The dream of parish ownership of the catechetical ministry can become a reality. The consequences are significant for everyone involved and the church as a whole. Throughout the journey, God is in our midst, using our ears, voices, minds and hearts. What a privilege this is for each individual and what joy it will bring to the whole church and all creation!

It has been a privilege, a challenge and a joy to work on this project for the National Association of Boards of Catholic Education of the National Catholic Educational Association. It has also been clouded by sadness at the death of my partner in this endeavor, John Balaguer. May the book spark a continuing dialog and a further development of community ownership of parish religious education!

Maria Thornton McClain

August, 1995

The Call To Be a Watercarrier: The Religious Education Board

Matthew J. Hayes

Max DePree, chairman of the board of Herman Miller, Inc., writes in *Leadership Jazz*[1] of the crucial importance of the "watercarrier" to an institution. Recalling the experience of some native American Indian tribes, where the watercarrier was highly respected because of the essential (literally!) survival of the community, he writes:

> To be a watercarrier suggests...continuity, longevity, commitment, dependability, and resourcefulness. Watercarriers transfer the essence of the institution to new people who arrive to help us and, eventually, to replace us (pages 68-69).

Through the waters of baptism, one receives grace. The parish board of religious education becomes "watercarrier" to the entire community so that parishioners at all ages and stages of development will actualize this grace. Without a board of religious education, there is a greater likelihood that the energies and efforts of the parish would be put only into the education and formation of one segment of the parish (children) or, possibly, over-reliance on one form of education and formation (school).

On the fifteenth anniversary of the issuance of the Vatican II **Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,** the American Catholic Bishops wrote a short and powerful statement titled *Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity*[2]. In this document the bishops offer their view of four calls that American Catholic laity respond to: adulthood, holiness, ministry and community.

These calls flow from baptism. A parish needs a religious education board so that these calls might be clearly articulated and responded to by all parishioners.

FUNCTIONS

A parish board performs four essential functions in setting up a climate that fosters lifelong learning in the community. These functions are: relate, educate, plan and connect.

Relate

It's important that members of the religious education board take time to build relationships with one another. The board should strive to become comfortable with faith sharing and prayer so that there is a sense of teamwork and support. Advocacy for religious education for all ages can be a tough job. The greater there is a sense of teamwork among the board members, the more individuals and the group will be sustained in focusing on the learning needs of the entire community. Teamwork can help keep a vision alive, especially if the parish practice is far from the vision.

Something as simple as taking a few moments to recognize the presence of the Lord and to share with one another how one has sensed God's presence since the last time the group met can go a long way in fostering connectedness among board members.

Educate

The board takes time to continually educate itself as adult learners about the shape of religious education: its successes and challenges as well as the issues that need to be confronted.

To illustrate, a board regularly explores new and creative options for parish religious education and stays informed about significant issues. Ideally, the board would read thoroughly, digest and apply a particular article or study about parish religious education.

For example, members could learn more about adult religious education by using *Groundwork: Cultivating Adult Religious Education in the Parish* (publication 393, Office of Publishing and Promotional Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1990) or *Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community* (publication 520-8, Office of Publishing and Promotional Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1992). The group could study current research about religious education, such as the May 1994 report *Towards Shaping the Agenda: A Study of Catholic Religious Education and Catechesis,* conducted by the Washington Office of Educational Testing Services, or *The Christian Initiation of Children,* by Robert D. Duggan and Maureen A. Kelly (published by Paulist Press, 1991).

Plan

A religious education board regularly surveys the efforts at education and formation in the community and identifies strengths and weaknesses. For example:

Does the community engage senior parishioners in learning?
Is there a parish resource center?
How are families involved in the faith formation process as families?
What is the formal religious education program for adolescents?
What types of ongoing Scripture study are taking place?
How does a parishioner gain an overview of the Doctrine of the Church?
If there is a school, how does the board work with the principal to see that the Catholic identity of the school is uppermost?

These questions would help the board identify some specific actions or goals that would be implemented by the parish staff or parish volunteers to continue to build on the strengths and address the weaknesses which have been uncovered.

The board might want to use a more formal process for program assessment. Two examples are: *Program for Parish Religious Education Evaluation and Development*, available from the Office of Religious Education, 49 Elm Street, Worcester, Massachusetts, 01609; or *Harvesting Hope: A Process for Parish Catechesis*, available from the Office for Religious Education, 1025 West Fry Street, Chicago, Illinois, 60622. The board may also ask the Director of Religious Education (DRE) for a report on learner needs which flows from using instruments like Assessment of Catholic Religious Education (ACRE) and Information for Growth (IFG), available from National Catholic Educational Association.

Another area that comes into play as part of the planning function of the board is to articulate and monitor the implementation of any parish policies that flow from this continual assessment. For example, the parish board might have a policy in the area of the parent's partnership in faith formation or sacramental preparation; or, a policy in supporting the adult parishioner as a faith-filled citizen or worker. The board's role would be to articulate policies and then monitor program efforts in regard to the implementation of these policies.

Connect

It's vital that a parish religious education board continually connect with other parish leaders who shape religious education within the parish. For example, there should be dialogue with the liturgy committee, the social action committee, and the parish school board (if there is a school). This helps the religious education board stay in touch with what different committees or groups are doing in the community which may impact religious education. It promotes sharing a vision of lifelong religious education that comes from the group's own continued learning, as well.

IN CONCLUSION

As the board works to integrate these four functions, it strives to become a group of "watercarriers" who assist parishioners of all ages to respond to their call and use their gifts as American Catholic laity. It's an essential role that they play and it's hard work!

In his writings, Max DePree asks, "What is it that transforms potential watercarriers into actual ones?" His answer:

> I'm not sure I know the answer. Some people become watercarriers in six months; some never do. When I think of the watercarriers I know, I think of qualities like compassion, humor, a sense of history, the ability to teach, and an unshakable commitment to the tribe. (*Leadership Jazz*, page 69)

If the word "parish" is substituted for the word "tribe," this quote fits quite well for the challenge that faces the parish board of religious education.

Without doubt, the qualities named are essential for effective board work and it goes without saying that the unshakable commitment comes from a deep-seated and alive faith.

Matthew J. Hayes is Executive Director of the Office of Lifelong Formation and Education for the Archdiocese of Louisville. He had previously served as Director, Religious Education and Coordinator, Adult Education for the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. His experience also includes parish Director of Religious Education. Mr. Hayes has taught high school religion, as well. He has published articles in *Living Light, PACE, Today's Parish, Momentum, Christian Initiation Resources, The Chicago Catechumenate* and *Caravan*.

[1] Currency/Doubleday, 1992.
[2] Publication Number 727, Office of Publishing Services, United States Catholic Conference, 1980.

A People, a Mission, a Structure!

John S. Balaguer and Maria Thornton McClain

Editor's note: *John Balaguer died before he completed this chapter, but left both resource material and the texts of previous presentations that he planned to incorporate into this work. John had a real passion for the role of the laity in the Church and especially the role of the community in handing on the faith. I am confident that this chapter represents his convictions on religious education boards/commissions.*

A well-designed and functioning religious education board will link and cluster individuals and groups of a parish so that the community will possess an integral vision of religious education from "cradle to kingdom." In order to make this dream a reality, there needs to be a clear sense of the nature of the board itself, its role and the mode in which it can operate effectively and with integrity. The board, as well as the pastoral leadership, must also have an understanding of the role and principles of catechesis, and the strategies of catechetical planning needed to reach the goal stated in the *National Catechetical Directory (NCD) #32:* to foster a faith that is "living, conscious and active."[1]

A PEOPLE

We begin with the board itself. To do this, one first needs to place it in a context of an authentic understanding of the church and theology of the laity.

In his book *The Lay-Centered Church,* Leonard Doohan explores five theological models of laity existing in the church today and cautions that the important question is not to search to identify the position of the layperson in the church but to focus on what it means to be church.

> Laypersons do not belong to the church, nor do they have a role in the church. Rather, through baptism they are church, and, in union with Christ, their mission is the mission of the church itself. There is no particular vocation for laity in the church, no need of a quest for lay identity. Being church in its fullness is the spirituality for laity.[2]

Doohan continues by noting that being church "means to live as a community in the world for the service of the world."[3]

In the section "Theology of the Laity and Ecclesial Restructuring," he expresses several ideas that apply to religious education boards. The first concept is that the recent move from an institutional to a community understanding of church is taken from Vatican II's *Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*. The second concept is the Second Vatican Council's teaching on collegiality. "While in its strict form this term refers only to bishops, it is nevertheless being interpreted and applied at all levels. The organizational model is now collegial rather than monarchical."[4] Finally, he states, as a result of Vatican II, there is a broader understanding of mission as belonging to the whole church and not just the hierarchy.

In the section "Theology of Self-Discovery for Laity," Doohan offers a word of caution that directly relates to religious education boards when he states: "Not all creative involvement is theologically possible, and if religious education is weak, the end result is neglect of fundamentals of faith."[5]

In a similar vein, Doohan's words about individuals who have held responsibilities in the church can be applied to boards. He states that a person's own education in contemporary ecclesiology is "necessary for genuine ecclesial service in the church."[6]

A MISSION[7]

Above all, fostering a "living, conscious and active" faith means working toward the formation of a more informed and articulate Catholic laity who are committed to working for the transformation of the world into the Kingdom of God. Careful, realistic planning is needed to turn this dream into reality. Ten principles of catechetical planning were delineated in *A Vision for the Catechetical Ministry: An Instrument for Diocesan and Parish Planning*, published by the National Catholic Educational Association.

The fourth principle is: "The entire community is responsible for catechesis."[8] Thus, responsibility for providing catechesis for each member of the community rests on the community as a whole. The *National Catechetical Directory (#22)* states that this shared responsibility implies the development and use of such structures as councils and boards to organize, implement and evaluate catechesis. This collaborative approach to educational planning in the Church requires considerable communication between the related ministries of catechetics, liturgy, family ministry, youth ministry, social justice and evangelization.

The other principle to be highlighted because of its relationship to religious education boards is: "A family focus is necessary for catechesis."[9] The church recognizes the Christian family as "the" basic community within which faith is nurtured.

In the family, the domestic church, catechesis and evangelization have their beginning as young children are introduced to the world's Creator and Lord. Because the process of religious maturation is life-long, parents need adequate information to make maximum use of "teachable moments" and to understand how telling their story within the family context is an integral form of catechesis. Because of the fundamental relationship between family life and the Church's life of faith, Pope John Paul II's

Apostolic Letter, *Familiaris Consortio*, requires an assessment of how all church activities, including catechesis, impact on families.

A STRUCTURE

The interrelatedness of church and family informs the way that effective boards operate and give direction to the religious education efforts of a parish.

The two strands, of the self-identity of a religious education board and an understanding of the principles and strategies for catechetical planning, blend with a third, a practical plan for an effective board structure.

The background for delineating this structure is the insight of the Second Vatican Council that the Church is "a community in the heart of the world in order to minister to the world. Community, incarnation, and ministry, then, are three conciliar insights that the Council universally applies to all the baptized."[10]

The community aspect of the church is appropriately expressed in terms of "family." The attributes of a healthy family can be easily grasped by board members and can productively inform the way they see themselves and carry on their work. In this way boards will realize that "we can only be church today and be relevant to the world in which we live when we tap and develop the rich variety of people's gifts from the Spirit."[11]

In a healthy board the members help each other develop their gifts. They build each other up. As in family life, so "in church life, it is less important to get things done than it is to get things done in union with others and thus portray the unity for which Christ prayed...The mission of all Christians is to live as the family of the church. It is more important to be church than to do anything."[12]

In 1980, the American bishops reflected on the decree from the Second Vatican Council, *The Apostolate of the Laity*, and wrote a statement entitled "Called and Gifted: The American Catholic Laity." In it they reinforced the idea that "baptism and confirmation empower all believers to share in some form of ministry."[13] Our bishops noted that just as ordination gives bishops, priests and deacons authority of leadership to serve God's people, so does baptism/confirmation empower lay women and men with the right and responsibility to participate in the church's mission.

Ministry, then, is not a choice for the Christian, but a privilege and an obligation. Beyond the individual call for ministry, there is a call as a people. This corporate call implies the necessity for individuals to discover ways to join their gifts with the gifts of others for the building of the Kingdom.

Just as there are obstacles to a family's being and acting in a healthy way, so there are obstacles to a collaborative ministry. Two attitudes that can get in the way of collaboration are competitiveness and parochialism. Whenever an overly competitive attitude dominates, attempts at collaboration will be virtually impossible. This can occur among various ministries in the parish and particularly between the religious education area and the parish school.

Parochialism is characterized by narrowness of thinking. It often leads to an attitude of exclusive concerns for one group with a corresponding apathy toward anyone not of that group.

A spirituality which will nurture and maintain a group in collaborative ministry is needed. That spirituality has two dimensions: a deepened relationship with God and an expression of that relationship in action.

If the group is to work collaboratively to accomplish the building of the kingdom, then the members need to pray together and share faith in order to discover how God is calling them communally. The group must have a process for moving toward collaboration. To paraphrase Proverbs 29:18, where there is not vision, the people perish. Only persons who have the opportunity to participate in the formulation of the vision will be committed to it. Where the people affected by the vision are not involved in formulating it, the predicted outcome is apathy.

The new Code of Canon Law has several provisions that reinforce collaborative ministry, the shared responsibility for all Christians for the communion and mission of the church, and the need for structures to implement this. In the canons on the obligations and rights of all Christians, the Code restates the Council's teaching on the true equality among the baptized with regard to their dignity and activity for building up the body of Christ (c. 208), and affirms the obligation all have to participate in building up the communion and holiness of the church and carrying out its mission (cc. 209-211).

All are free to express their needs and desires to church authorities and all have the right and sometimes the duty to share their opinions with them on matters pertaining to the good of the church (c. 212, s-2 & 3).

The foremost leader of the parish remains the pastor. The pastor is the point of unity between the various ministries of the parish and the mission of the larger church. His leadership is greatly strengthened when he continually develops the skills and structures that invite open dialogue, shared decision making and effective action.

The role of the pastor may be named as an enabler of ministries. The work of enabling is one of equipping. It is a work of helping parish members to recognize and put into action the power to follow their baptismal call as a "chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people." (1 Peter 2:9)

In becoming an enabler, the pastor may fear that he will give up a good deal of his responsibility or power; but instead he will find that he is enriching the ministry of the whole parish with a ripple effect that can have great consequences and fulfill his responsibility better than he could have done alone.

These collaborative roles of board and pastor can be implemented not only on the local level, but also on the diocesan and national levels. The National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB) is the organization through which the bishops act on the national level. Understanding how this group operates, what it has accomplished, and how it is used by the American bishops would be helpful in understanding how to build a collaborative link with it.[14]

It is of key importance that both laity and hierarchy listen to the promptings of the spirit and promote the unity of the church by speaking with one voice. The decision making process itself must witness to the faith dimension of the community. The community finds its identity in its faith response to the word when it shares one bread and one cup. That

identity must remain intact when the community moves from the table of the Lord to the table of the meeting to make its decisions about its mission in the world.

The question arises regarding effective structures of governance for religious education of whether to have a single, or "total" board where there is also a parish school, or to have two boards, one religious education and one school.

The NCEA publication, *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*[15], points out that parish pastoral councils often establish an education committee as part of the larger parish pastoral council in order to provide ongoing communication between the parish school and the catechetical program, and the council. The comment is made that pressing needs in religious education or the school will force the board to spend too much time on one or the other. The *Primer* also expresses a concern that it can be difficult to find people willing to serve on a committee which has such broad responsibilities.

Despite these concerns, the bishops of the United States have clearly stated a preference for a unified diocesan board of education. The advantage of a board that would have the responsibility for all aspects of education is that it witnesses to the one educational mission of the Church.[16] It also promotes cooperation among the various educational personnel, facilities, total administration and financial planning, and discourages "turf building", thus modeling the Vatican II principle of collaboration.

Building Better Boards, Sister Lourdes Sheehan's handbook for board members in Catholic education,[17] points out that if there is a separate board of religious education in the diocese it must work closely with the diocesan school board for the good of the church's educational ministry.

Building Better Boards emphasizes the importance of appropriate lines of communication to accomplish a unified educational mission for the parish if a separate board of religious education and a parish school board are set up.

If there are two separate governing bodies for religious education and school, then there needs to be a coordinating body such as an education committee of the pastoral council to coordinate the separate activities of the two groups. As an example, in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, the handbook for religious education committees lists several areas where the religious education committee and the school board relate.

These areas are:

1) religious education philosophy and curriculum;
2) catechist formation and certification;
3) sacramental preparation;
4) financial support of the total religious education mission of the parish.

Any other items pertaining to the school which are brought to the parish council are also presented to the religious education committee for discussion and recommendation as part of the action of the parish council. In this system, the religious education committee is responsible to "coordinate communication and planning for total Christian education."[18]

In summary, a well-designed and functioning board will be a com-

munity. It will be committed to the mission of the Church, and the ministry of the Word, in particular. Its deliberations will demonstrate a spirit of collaboration and evangelization. It will act as a body united to the whole Church.

In *Sharing Wisdom*, a book on being and building church by Sister Mary Benet McKinney, OSB, there is a chapter titled "The God of the Gathering."[19] In it she comments on Matthew 18:20, "For where two or three meet in my name, I shall be there with them." The visual image of that scriptural phrase is not merely an invisible presence in the meeting room. Far more immediate is the promise of our God: God will not simply be in the room with us. God will live in our very beings calling, forming, challenging, speaking, listening. Or to put it another way, God will be using our ears, our voices, our minds and hearts to be God's presence in and for the Church.

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[2]Doohan, Leonard, *The Lay-Centered Church*. Winston Press, 1984, p. 24. See the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity 1: 3: 1; Dogmatic Constitution on the Church 3:2.
[3]Ibid.
[4]Ibid., p.17.
[5]Ibid., p.23.
[6]Ibid., p. 38.
[7]This section is taken directly from John Balaguer's presentation, entitled "A People, a Mission, a Structure," given at the 1991 National Catholic Educational Association Convention.
[8]*A Vision for the Catechetical Ministry: An Instrument for Diocesan and Parish Planning*, Editors: Thompson, Andrew D., PhD and Rev. Francis D. Kelly, STL, PhD, 1985, National Catholic Educational Association, pp. 14 - 15.
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The Spirituality Of Decision Making

Mary Benet McKinney, OSB

Let's start at the very beginning. Boards are one of the ways the laity take their share of the responsibility for the teaching mission of the church. To accept membership on a board is to respond to a call to ministry; it is recognizing that board activity is about more than policy development and strategic planning and financial accountability. The first priority of any board is to nourish and strengthen the parish community and to model church.

This does not mean, of course, that the board is not about policy development, strategic planning and financial accountability. It is. But it's about more. And that "more" is what makes a church board different from boards in the public sector. There is a scriptural, spiritual and theological dimension to this ministry that needs to be understood and embraced.

"Whenever you come together," Jesus promises in the Gospel of Matthew, "I will be with you." Again he says at the conclusion of that Gospel, "My Spirit will be with you always." We will never be orphaned, never left without the spirit, either as the universal church, as individuals or as groups such as boards trying to serve the mission of Jesus. The promise is clear. The spirit is available to us. We each are given our own piece of the wisdom. The challenge is to recognize that awesome reality both in ourselves and in one another.

We can say it another way. The spirit teaches, cares, calls, challenges, affirms, touches and loves us in the daily experiences we call life. God is the God of our lived experiences. If we are attentive, if we allow life to speak to us, wisdom will be ours. However, it will only be our little piece of the wisdom coming from the limited experiences of our own lives.

God is also the God of the gathering, speaking through the many voices and many experiences of the folks gathered in God's name. If we can trust our own wisdom, we can trust one another's. If we can recognize that we do not have ALL of the wisdom (that is God's prerogative!), we will be open to the wisdom of others. We will also realize that every person's wisdom will be a bit or a lot different because every person has lived life

differently.

It is this kind of theological insight that will enable us to use a church model of decision making rather than the secular parliamentary model that leads to so many power struggles and win-lose experiences.

First, however, we need to reflect on the spirituality that flows from and nourishes life in the spirit. Our God is a personal God. A God who walks the daily journey with us. A God who is present to us even in those times when we seem not to be present to God. "The Word was made flesh," we often read and pray. True. But equally true is the theological statement that the Word IS made flesh. Incarnation continues to happen because you and I live. In fact, the greatest presence of this incarnate God is another human being! We hear God when we listen to one another. We touch God when we embrace one another. We learn about God when we learn about one another. And we find the God who cares and calls, who challenges and affirms, who touches and loves, deep within ourselves, waiting to be heard.

Key, then, to trusting our own wisdom as well as the wisdom of others, is an intimate relationship with the Spirit. We are called to process our daily life, to pay attention to what the Spirit is trying to teach us and how the Spirit is trying to form us.

Processing life involves three things: discovering our personal prime time, locating a God space and being faithful to a method of reflection that fits our personality. It requires a daily discipline and a relatively small amount of time. It demands a desire to grow spiritually and a willingness to risk the loving activity of the Divine Potter.

Prime time is that time of the day or night when our heads work best; when we are most alert and alive. It is different for different people. Some folks, we call them morning people, actually wake up when they get up in the morning. Others don't do so well in the morning. We are night people. We come alive in the early evening or later. The point is that each of us needs to identify our own prime time and then carve ten or fifteen minutes out of it each day to recall and reflect on the events of the past twenty-four hours and how God has walked the journey with us.

A God space is a place where nothing can get to us for those few minutes. We move away from people, phones, TV, radio, whatever. Such spaces may seem hard to find. In fact, they may already be a part of our daily routine. Do you jog? Or take walks with the dog? Do you drive by yourself? Is there a place in the house that is yours? Or a church or chapel near by? Find it and claim it. Let others know that this is your space and your time. Even my dog seems to sense when I am in my prayer space and seldom disturbs me!

The third ingredient for processing life is how you do it. Again, this is very personal and depends a lot on your preferred style of thinking. Introverts are people who live within themselves. They think while they think and so they pray while they think. They center themselves and get in touch with the God within. Extroverts don't function the same way. They think while they talk so they must pray in some verbal way. Extroverts talk out loud to God and often they need to hear God's response to them out loud, even if it is their own voice speaking the words for God. Extroverts also tend to be faithful journal keepers because that is another way to

externalize the conversation. The point is that you need to figure out the method that works for you. What is critical is that you are communicating with your God. Each day you are asking God about the events of the past day. "How were you calling, touching, challenging, loving me, Lord?" Then you must LISTEN and allow God to answer the questions. Trust the God who speaks to you through scripture. Trust the God who speaks to you through your imagination. Trust the God who speaks to you as you write in your journal. Trust the God of your lived experience!

Processing life enables us to approach every facet of life from the vantage point of the wisdom of the Spirit. It nurtures our desire to live out of a faith stance and to be the holy people we are called to be by our baptism. It doesn't guarantee success but it points us in the right direction.

Here we meet the God who has promised to be with us whenever we come together: the God of the Gathering. We come together as Boards of Religious Education. We each bring our own expectations, our experiences, our talents and our personal agendas. We come in good faith to serve the church, to serve the parish and to do what is best for the programs that we are asked to support.

All too often, however, the personal agendas conflict and people start to compete rather than to cooperate. We find ourselves in win-lose situations that are not very comfortable and that don't meet our expectations for what church should be about. What goes wrong? Or, as someone put it to me years ago, "Why do we have to fight in church about church?" We don't. But we will unless we learn to deal with issues and make decisions within a model that allows the spirit to work with us.

I call this model a shared wisdom model of decision making. The basic concept is very simple. Everyone in the group has, by virtue of their baptism and their commitment to this ministry, a piece of the wisdom. To the degree that all those pieces are allowed to surface and interact the group will come closer and closer to the wisdom the Spirit has to share with this group at this time.

The implications are many. For starters, each member of the group must be willing to share his or her wisdom. The luxury of sitting on one's wisdom is not allowed. Neither is it acceptable to shove wisdom! The challenge is two-fold: to trust that your own wisdom will be heard and find its place in the final decision and also to trust the wisdom of every other member of the group and its place in shaping the final decision.

Listening is critical to the model's success. The discerning tradition, from which this shared wisdom philosophy is taken, speaks of this as "hearing with the ear of the heart." It demands that we listen with openness. That we respect the opinions of others and treasure their wisdom. It also gives us the freedom not to panic. We don't have to be afraid of the opinions or ideas of others because theirs, like ours, is only one piece of the wisdom.

All too often we listen only to defend our own ideas or we listen to people through filters we have put on them from negative experiences from the past or from reputations that have preceded them. We must learn to let go of those filters and listen instead for the wisdom of the Spirit coming through the lived experience of the speaker. Granted, this is a faith stance. But, then, we are about Church, are we not?

Preparation for meetings is a key ingredient of this model. Everyone involved needs adequate information prior to the actual meeting. What is adequate? Whatever it will take to enable the members to think and pray through the agenda in order to have their own personal wisdom in place. And that is what starts the process. Everyone is given a chance to share while the others listen. No arguments or debates take place until all the initial wisdom is out. The chair then does a summary of all that has been shared and the group is given some reflection time to consider the new ideas and information that resulted from the sharing. Once again, everyone is given the opportunity to share, thus generating additional data and reactions. After reflecting on this, the sharing continues. This kind of cyclical process is repeated until it becomes evident that some degree of consensus is beginning to happen. It then becomes important to ask those who are in the minority position to explain why. Their insights are explored, often resulting in another round of reflecting and sharing. The aim is to reach a consensus that all will be able to support and implement. It does not mean that everyone will be equally thrilled with the final decision. But it will be seen as the best this group can do at this time. Or, to say it another way, it will be the closest this group can come to hearing and responding to the God of the gathering, the Spirit among them.

Such a process will not work without prayer and faith. It is important for a board to be able to pray together, to celebrate Eucharist together and to share faith. Annual days of retreat, sharing scripture and taking time to ask for the guidance of the spirit as the group struggles with decisions are all necessary and helpful means to call the group to its mission.

To serve on a board is to be called to an important role in today's Church. It is also to be called to ministry and a new depth of personal spirituality. Without this dimension boards may manage programs and develop policy. But they will not build Church!

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Forming a Religious Education Commission — A Team Effort

Elaine Ouellette

The process for forming a Religious Education Commission is an important tool in establishing a commission that will be effective and productive in carrying out its mission. The process could be compared to a first adventure in whitewater rafting. One does not jump into a raft alone and sail down the river smoothly and without danger. For a ride to be successful, the guide will first instruct the team regarding its purpose and goal to reach the end safely. A good guide is a good leader. A good guide will know where to place each person according to size and weight so that when everyone is in position, the raft is balanced. The raft is placed in a gentle part of the river so that the team can practice before going into rougher water. When everyone is comfortable, the guide will proceed forward. Everyone must abide by the rules. When one person is out of sync, the whole crew could be in danger. But when they are all working together, they are successful. There are times on the journey downstream that the players can jump off and swim or play around. But when the guide orders them back into the raft, they know that they are coming to some rapids and rough waters.

In working with developing new commissions, my experience as facilitator has been to guide a group of people through a process of writing a charter for the commission. The process begins with an initial meeting of the pastor and catechetical leader of a parish in order to focus on the vision and purpose of religious education in their parish. It is important that the charter be written by a selected group and not just taken from an example in a book; therefore, examples that I may use will be obvious and general. The more one group can take ownership in the charter, the more successful the commission will function. It is important to make clear what model the commission will follow. I work with commissions whose role it is to be advisory to the pastor and catechetical leader. I prefer to use

the term catechetical leader versus DRE since all parishes do not have a qualified Director of Religious Education and the responsibility for overseeing the religious education program falls on either the pastor or an appointed person.

The process involves forming a task force that will meet for four consecutive meetings with an outside facilitator, in order to draw up a charter and plans for implementation. The work of the task force is completed at the end of the four meetings. It may be that some of the members of the task force will be appointed to the first commission. It is the responsibility of the task force to determine how members will be chosen or selected.

THE TASK FORCE

The task force is a group of eight to ten people, chosen by the pastor and/or catechetical leader, that represents a cross section of the parish so that the vision of religious education is not limited to parents of school age children and sacramental preparation programs. By having a cross section of the parish on the task force, the emphasis of catechesis as "a life long process for the individual and a constant and concerted pastoral activity for the Christian community" (NCD#32) can be accomplished.

It would be a mistake to choose only those people already involved in the religious education program such as catechists and coordinators. For obvious reasons, the pastor and catechetical leader are important members of the task force.

THE STRUCTURE

The structure of the meetings follows the "Power Process Cycle" of **evaluation, recommendation, decision, action** and is adapted to meet the needs of this group. In carrying out this work, a motivated task force progresses through a cycle.

1) **Evaluation** of the present situation in relation to the vision which the parish desires for itself
2) **Recommendation** for future development based on the evaluation
3) **Decision** on the best course for future development based on the recommendation
4) **Action** to implement the decision

Roles for each person or group differ at each point in the cycle; yet each is interrelated with the other. Each of these steps is the basis for the four meetings in which the task force convenes. I will attempt to describe the process as it unfolds; but, one must keep in mind that a process unfolds naturally with the flow of the group. It is important that the facilitator moves the meetings forward.

THE FACILITATOR

The role of the facilitator is like that of the guide in whitewater rafting who must be capable of keeping the process on track both during the meetings and between meetings as well as encouraging participation among all members of the task force. The facilitator should be knowledgeable of the end product, always cognizant of when to let the players roam a bit and when to bring them back to the main course.

THE CHARTER

The charter is a document that consists of three main parts: the **Mission Statement, the Structure/Organization** and the **Priorities**.

The Mission Statement is a brief and concise statement that addresses the questions: "Who are we?" "Why do we exist?" and "Where are we going?" It gives direction to the group, stating to whom they are accountable and with whom they are in relationship.

The Structure/Organization determines the way the group will accomplish its tasks: how many members, number of meetings, duties of members, and so forth. This may vary from parish to parish depending on the needs of each individual parish.

The Priorities are formed from a list of concerns that arise and are discussed by the task force during its meetings. These may be the basis for the first things to be discussed by the newly formed commission, but not necessarily the course they must follow.

The question is often asked by the task force, "How can we write something for a group that doesn't exist and we are not a part of?" It is important to remember that they are a task force formed to complete this task and then make recommendations to the pastor for implementation. It may be that most of these people make up the first commission, depending on the advice of the task force.

THE PROCESS

The first meeting is the first step in the process, the evaluation step. The group is asked to brainstorm on the present situation in relation to the future which the organization desires for itself.

Each person is asked to write down three areas of strengths and three areas of weaknesses that exist in the present structure. Everyone is asked to respond with one strength and then one weakness. A recorder writes them on a piece of newsprint. No discussion takes place at this time. It is important to try to surface all the areas of strengths first and then all the areas of weaknesses before moving to the next step. This will take the better part of the first meeting.

Between the first and the second meeting, the facilitator will take the list and try to categorize it into the three categories: Mission/Purpose, Structure/Organization and Priorities. Before the next meeting, the facilitator will ask each member to work on her/his own. They should first look at the weaknesses in each category and turn them into strengths. This will now eliminate the list of weaknesses. The next step is to write a sentence drawing from the new list of strengths that they would like to see included in each category.

For example: under the category Mission Statement, some strengths may be: good catechists, Sacrament Program, home groups, etc. and some weaknesses may be: kids do not go to church; parents aren't involved; adults are uninformed etc.

Changing these weaknesses into strengths may look like this:

A. Adult Education needs to take some priority.
B. Family catechesis may bring parents and children to church and reconciliation.

A sentence for the Mission Statement may read:

Religious Education is more than sacramental preparation, it must become a part of our everyday lives.

The second meeting focuses on beginning to generate statements for a rough draft of the charter. It runs much the same way as the first meeting with a recorder compiling a list of the individual statements. This is considered the recommendation part of the Power Process Cycle.

An example of the second meeting could look like this: members come with their individual lists of weaknesses which they have turned into strengths and their general statements for each category. The facilitator takes one category at a time and asks each individual to share their statement. The recorder writes each statement on newsprint before they proceed to the next category. At this meeting, there are several areas left open-ended. Again this is basically a brainstorming session. Some discussion may be carried on but it is the facilitator's role to move it forward or else the group will not finish. The Mission Statement and Structure/Organization take most of the time; the Priorities develop by themselves out of the discussions at the meetings.

Between the second and third meeting the facilitator will take the statements and write a rough draft, listing areas that need to be addressed, then send it to the members to read and edit before the third meeting.

At the third meeting, the group works together to formulate the rough draft. Between the third and fourth meeting, the facilitator makes the necessary changes, corrections and additions. During the fourth meeting, the members approve the final draft of the charter and make plans for implementation.

MEETING FORMAT

A Religious Education Commission cannot function without a knowledgeable group of people; therefore, it is important that members who volunteer to serve on the commission are updated with the current documents on religious education, such as *Catechesi Tradendae, the National Catechetical Directory* and now the *Catechism of the Catholic Church.*

It should be stated someplace in the charter that the format for a Religious Education Commission meeting will include at least one hour of in-service. This in-service allows for discussion of articles related to the issues of concern and, in the beginning stages, serves as a most valuable vehicle so that the members of the commission will be working on common ground.

Just as in rafting, the inexperienced team does not know what to expect. The thrill of rafting is to go through the rapids. There is always danger involved; but, with the help of a good and knowledgeable guide, the trip is a success. So with our Religious Education Commission, the experience can be thrilling and the outcome leads to the Kingdom of God.

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The Why and How Of Forming a Religious Education Board

Eileen Loughran

Religious education programs strive to bring the gospel message and church teachings to the parish community. The responsibilities of the Director of Religious Education (DRE) are to directly serve the people enrolled in the parish religious education programs. This chapter focuses on a board organized to provide the DRE with support and insights regarding the youth-centered programs. In addition to this board, it is necessary to have another advisory panel to initiate, promote and coordinate parish programs and learning opportunities for adults.

There may be overlapping between the areas of responsibility between the Religious Education for Children and Youth Board as well as Adult Education Advisory Board. It is the role of the DRE to be the liaison and coordinate the ideas, activities and enthusiasm of both boards and efficiently serve the parish needs.

When religious education programs are a living sign of the message, indirect activities also surface. Service to the poor, rejected and less fortunate become important.

Bringing people to holiness demands an awareness of persons as "whole" beings. DREs must be in touch with the changing social, intellectual, psychological and economic needs of the parishioners to whom they minister. It is essential that a sensitivity to the unique family situations and cultural traditions be considered in program planning.

For example, the following types of questions often arise.

Is the DRE a parent?

Does the DRE have children of school age?

Does the DRE know the lifestyles, the commitments and the demands that the families are facing or balancing?

Is the DRE knowledgeable of all the sports, social and instructional activities that the children attend?

Does the DRE have an ear for the opinions and attitudes of parishioners regarding the parish religious education program?

What is going on in the public schools?

What are the community issues of the day?

There is a sane way all this can be addressed. Organizing a representative board may be the solution.

Answers to the following questions will help determine who should be members.

Question I
Who is served, i.e., children, grades preschool to high school, families of these children, children preparing for sacraments, etc.?

Question II
Who will be giving this service, i.e., catechists, office staff, volunteer aides, etc.?

Question III
What other important people need to know about these services, i.e., the pastor, priest advisor to religious education, school principal, etc.?

Question IV
Which other groups would benefit by a voice in a collaborative environment, i.e., pastoral council, liturgy committee, social action group, etc.?

When these questions are answered, this newly-formed representative board may consist of:

Several Catechists—one representative from preschool, elementary, junior high and high school programs. These catechists should be persons who show potential leadership qualities.

At least two parents—one parent may have children in more than one grade level. Try to ask parents whose children attend various schools and exemplify the ethnic diversity of the parish and/or children with special needs.

Religious Education Office Staff—select one staff person to serve as secretary. If this is not possible, rotate the role of secretary. Minutes of the meeting are very important and necessary.

Coordinator of Sacrament Preparation Program—persons responsible for First Eucharist and/or Confirmation are valuable assets to the religious education board.

Pastor—and/or clergy advisor assigned to religious education.

School Principal—if he/she is unavailable, it may be appropriate to recruit a representative faculty member or parent active in school activities.

Now, what needs to be done to get this new board off to a good start?

Step I

Invite this representative group to a meeting. Use a letter explaining the reason for the meeting. Indicate the exact length of time required (about one hour). Follow up with a personal call.

Step II

Set a clear agenda for the first meeting. Agenda can address introductions and reason why the DRE and parish religious education program needs a representative board. The main purpose is to better serve the youth and their families through acquiring information regarding the needs of the broader community, lifestyles, activities and calendars. The secondary aim is to discover the attitudes of parishioners regarding religious education, which they openly express in community settings, i.e., Little League, PTA meetings, etc.

Offer a proposed schedule of future meetings. Allow time for questions, reactions and suggestions. Then, ask for a year's commitment to this board. Honesty and clear vision of expectations allow participants to know clearly their responsibilities and rewards.

Step III

Send minutes of the meeting to those who attended. Thank everyone, even those who may not choose to be part of the board.

Step IV

If necessary and before the next meeting, recruit appropriate members to complete the total representation. Personal contact with a one-on-one meeting will give the new recruits all the information.

ROLE AND FUNCTIONS

This board can become the eyes, ears and hands of religious education in the community. This will happen if the DRE sets up regularly scheduled meetings, plans efficient agendas, respects the recommendations of the representatives, is open to new ideas, suggestions and evaluations. Sharing meeting responsibilities is a way to make all members realize their importance. This can be accomplished by including reports from each person regarding the position each represents, rotating the opportunity to lead prayer, and asking for agenda additions before beginning each meeting. Consistency in agenda format allows participants to know the DRE's expectations and allows for a comfortable atmosphere.

Parent representatives will bring support of the catechetical program to local public schools, the sports field, ballet classes, and adult social events outside the parish plant. Parents can share with the DRE the value issues, problems and programs being addressed in the public schools.

Parents know the community calendar. They know the activities that draw families in too many directions. They can give insights and suggestions on how the religious formation can work in concert with the complexity of family life.

This board of adults needs opportunities to grow in wholeness, another word for holiness. Include on-the-job training and orientation in the

agenda of the first few meetings. It is important for the DRE to listen to the community's perceived picture of the parish religious education program. Take notes and do not become defensive. Any false notions can be dispelled in the form of in-services during subsequent meetings. Using a brief theological presentation relating to the liturgical season or lectionary will offer background material and faith formation for the board. Board enrichment can also happen through already existing parish adult education programs. A personal invitation to these events helps ensure attendance by the board members.

It may take several meetings of sharing, listening and storytelling for the board to become cohesive. Starting with "ice breakers," that is, organized sharing of personal successes (family and professional), or having a potluck meal will help develop the mutual respect and trust needed for a working board. Jesus is our model. He gathered with his disciples often. They listened and shared meals. Then he trained them for ministry.

A time for spiritual growth can be the core of a board's success; but be realistic. A weekend retreat would be wonderful; but, many people, especially parents, would find that difficult. Spiritual growth can be built into the regular meeting, using shared prayer and theological presentations as a base. It can work very well if the DRE is prepared and consistent. A day of well planned prayer may work. The DRE and pastor can attend as participants, not as leaders.

The board can be a program evaluation tool for the DRE. When a spirit of trust and honesty becomes the norm, constructive criticism and clearly stated concerns can be presented. It is most important that everyone will recognize that critical statements are addressed to the program, not to persons working with the DRE. Parents on the board could design the parent evaluation tool. The instrument could be in a written form or a random telephone survey, with results discussed by the board. Items being evaluated should reflect the goals of the program and their effectiveness.

The Religious Education Board can advise about the best time for classes, consideration of new models, public image of the program in the parish and community, financial planning, affirmation of volunteers, and evaluation. Input regarding textbooks and resources may be helpful to the DRE.

In working with the group, one must be aware of the "Board of Directors" image. This is not a profit and loss business. It is a ministry of teaching, caring, inspiring and passing on the message of Jesus and His church. A team model offers a more comfortable vision of this board. "Catechetical Ministry Team" implies everyone is playing the same game, with the same goal, but different positions.

While the religious education board may be advisory, there may also be the need to see measurable successes. People like to "do" something. One way to accomplish this is to have the board plan and implement special events. Special events could be a mass and supper for catechists, reception on Catechetical Sunday, a special dinner for families with children preparing for First Eucharist or a parish reception after celebration of Confirmation.

Another option would be for the board to investigate, plan and organize service projects for the youth and their families. When this direction is

followed, there will be measurable success. The DRE's role is to point the board in the right direction by giving resources and ideas, being open to new possibilities, then let go!

Arbitrary ideas for projects may work for a time. For a reasonable measure of effectiveness, written goals and objectives are necessary. Setting aside time to write a mission statement for the parish religious education program can be the first-year goal of the newly-organized board.

One approach would be to take the parish mission statement and add the necessary components that help reflect the mission of the religious education program.

Forming a mission statement is a big project, but worth the work. A starting point may be: *Gaudium et Spes* (Pastoral Constitution On the Church In the Modern World), *Sharing the Light of Faith* (The National Catechetical Directory) or *Catechism of the Catholic Church.*

Forming a religious education board is a support system necessary for successful parish catechetical ministry. The program belongs to the people. This board allows parishioners, parents and catechists to have a place for sharing concerns and an opportunity to learn the ins and outs of how the parish religious education program functions. The DRE will be able to expand services, consider new ideas and have the necessary assistance needed to implement the new programs. The board is a network that offers the DRE a new voice in the parish. Through a religious education board, other adults come together to learn, grow, pray and play in a spirit of Catholic collegiality.

Refer to **Appendix H** for the model *Vision of Parish Religious Education*, an example of one parish's attempt to bring the gospel to the youth and families. Goals and measurable strategies are an outline of accountability for the religious education advisory board, the DRE and the paid staff. Regular review of this document gives landmarks of successes, achievements or awareness of tasks to be done.

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Parish Religious Education Committees —Why Bother With Them?

James J. DeBoy, Jr.

In a time when budgets are tight, with so many new responsibilities being added to parish and school ministers, and pressures intensifying because of increased expectations and time limitations, there is a need to prioritize one's activities and make decisions about reducing some activities. At some times and in some places, parish catechetical leaders are determining that parish religious education committees are not one of the groups that should be receiving much of their time. More than one pastor has said, "Why do we need a committee? That's why we hired a DRE." Others have said, "Doesn't our DRE know more about religious education and what should be done than uninformed parishioners? Having a parish religious education committee is now an unnecessary drain on our DRE's time."

It is this author's conviction that such views are short-sighted and contradictory to many other vitally important principles for effective parish leadership. Religious education committees do take time, and very often people are uninformed about issues and needs and how to address them appropriately when they first join a committee. But if this situation continues for very long, there is something seriously amiss about the vision and/or skill of the parish staff and other leaders.

WHY A PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE?

This is a very legitimate question, and it deserves a comprehensive answer. The first place to start is to understand how religious education is related to the mission of the church. The scriptures provide the fundamental starting point for understanding this relationship.

We find in the scriptures, in the very last section of the Gospel of Matthew, the mission which Jesus himself gave to the Church: *Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the*

Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them all that I have commanded you, and behold, I am with you always even to the end of time. Matthew 28: 18-20.

The "making of disciples" is clearly at the heart of the church's mission, and "baptizing" and "teaching" all that Jesus commanded are essential and foundational elements in the process of making disciples. It is important to be aware that the term "baptizing" in the early church includes all that we do now in the initiation of people into the church through the RCIA, the baptizing of infants, and the sacramental preparation for Eucharist, Confirmation and Penance. Teaching all that Jesus commanded is a serious, ongoing responsibility of the Church, and learning about all that Jesus commanded is a life-long responsibility of anyone who would be an authentic disciple of Jesus. We now understand that catechesis includes ongoing initiation and systematic teaching for children, adolescents and adults.

Building on this understanding, Pope John Paul II has stressed the importance of catechesis in relationship to the task of "making disciples." In his very first Apostolic Exhortation, "On Catechesis in Our Time," Pope John Paul II clearly stated: *Very soon the name of catechesis was given to the whole of the efforts within the church to make disciples, to help people to believe that Jesus is the Son of God, so that believing they might have life in his name, and to educate and instruct them in this life and thus build up the Body of Christ. The church has not ceased to devote her energy to this task.* (CT, # 1)

Catechesis, then, both in the early church and continuing to today, is essential for carrying out the church's mission. Catchesis, along with the celebration of the liturgy *(Do this in memory of me)* and action on behalf of the poor, the sick and the victims of prejudice and oppression *(What ever you do to the least ones, you do to me)* are clearly fundamental mandates of the Lord.

Over the centuries, the forms and structures for catechesis have evolved and shifted. In recent centuries, catechesis often meant primarily whatever we do to assist children in understanding our faith. The bishops of the Second Vatican Council called for a renewal of catechesis with special attention to the catechesis of adults. Pope John Paul II also called attention to the "central problem of the catechesis of adults" which he said is the principal form of catechesis. (CT, # 43)

In 1979, the Bishops of the United States published *Sharing the Light of Faith*, the National Catechetical Directory. They identified four "components" or aims of catechesis: proclaiming the Christian message, building up the sense of community, preparing for worship, and motivating for justice and service. (Cf. NCD # 213, #215, #227, #228)

These aims are directly related to the four foundational ministries of the church: proclaiming and teaching, building community, prayer and worship, and action for justice, peace and service. So by doing catechesis well, we are preparing children, teens and adults to understand and participate in the essential ministries of the church. This is why catechesis is so important. Catechesis points people to ministry. It is a source of life and energy for the church.

Catechesis is analogous to the system of veins and arteries which carries blood throughout the body. This system works very quietly and you usually don't notice it; but, when this system breaks down or its function-

ing is impaired, the whole body quickly begins to deteriorate. The same thing can happen in the life of the parish or school. When catechesis is neglected and it isn't functioning well, it may not be immediately noticed; but the life of the parish can deteriorate significantly.

Who then is responsible for insuring that religious education/catechesis is carried out effectively? Surely, parish leaders (pastors, DREs, school principals, etc.) are vitally important; but, Pope John Paul II calls our attention to an essential principle: *It is true that catechesis can be given anywhere...but the parish community must continue to be the prime mover and preeminent place for catechesis.* (CT, #67)

Catechesis, then, is the responsibility of the entire parish community. How can we help the parish community realize this responsibility and what are the most effective ways this responsibility can be *carried out?*

It begins with a group of parishioners who are interested in religious education and who are willing to give their time, energy and skills to the task of fostering a comprehensive religious education effort. This will include systematic teaching of the richness of our faith to children, adolescents and adults. Furthermore, catechesis stresses ongoing initiation into the faith community through sacramental formation, the catechumenate with children, and the RCIA, ever mindful that catechists and leaders need to be properly prepared. This is an essential and fundamental way of assisting the entire parish community in fulfilling its role in being the "prime mover" for catechesis.

The bishops of the United States recognized this when they stated in *Sharing the Light of Faith,* the National Catechetical Directory: *A single representative board, responsible for the total educational program, should be involved in catechetical planning in every parish.* (NCD # 224)

In the past 25 years, there have been many serious efforts to implement this statement of the Bishops. Some parishes have established committees for Total Catholic Education to oversee planning for both the Catholic school and the parish religious education program. Such a structure fosters the understanding that all the programs must share the same vision and principles as the parish carries out its educational responsibility.

Other parishes have set up a variety of committees (for the school, for adult catechesis, for youth ministry, etc.) and these groups operate under the umbrella of the Parish Council.

Still other parishes have an overall Total Education Board with various subcommittees for the different catechetical efforts. All of these structures have worked with varying degrees of success and failure; but a couple of realities have become clear.

One: when there is a school, the very nature of a school demands that a great deal of attention be given to policy development, fundraising, staff hiring and formation, and other areas. When there is only one committee overseeing all the educational programs in the parish, including the school, something—either the school or other areas of parish religious education—is neglected. This reality has led to the legitimate development of parish school boards throughout the country.

Two: comprehensive religious education also needs serious attention, and when some or all of the various elements (children's catechesis,

adolescent catechesis, adult catechesis, sacramental formation and initiation, catechist recruitment and formation, etc.) are neglected, or when these various efforts are operating independently of one another, the life of the parish eventually suffers significantly. So even as parish school boards have evolved, there has also developed a renewed sensitivity for the need for a parish religious education committee. Sometimes they are called "boards" or "commissions"; but, the need for such a structure is now clearly seen by most parish leaders who understand the essential place of religious education for the life and mission of the parish.

To answer the question posed at the beginning of this section ("Why should there be a parish religious education committee?"), one response is that the bishops of the United States have called for such a group in every parish.

Complementing and implementing this challenge of the bishops are three very basic reasons. The three basic reasons are ownership, reality testing and collaborative spirit.

Ownership

A religious education committee offers the opportunity for more parishioners to understand the importance of religious education for the life and mission of the parish, and these people can then take greater ownership of the programs as well as inform others in the parish about them. Members of the religious education committee then become "ambassadors of good will" for the programs with the rest of the parish community, and the sense that religious education is "our" program grows steadily.

Reality Testing

By testing out new ideas and new programs with a small group of interested parishioners, the parish religious education leaders can receive immediate feedback about the feasibility and probable acceptance of such an idea or program. One DRE stated this principle this way, "If I can't convince a group of 11 people about the need for and desirability of a new program, how will I be able to convince the much larger group who will be expected to participate in the program?"

Another DRE, who was new in the parish, would have saved a lot of time if he had brought to the committee early on in his thinking process his idea about moving the children's religious education classes from Sunday morning to Saturday morning. When, after many hours of work, he brought a very detailed schedule to the religious education committee, he was immediately informed that Saturday morning would be a disaster because of the many sports, recreation and community activities held on Saturday mornings in that area.

The members of the religious education committee are connected to the life of the parish and the civic community. Their experience and understanding of the parish and the community is a rich source of wisdom that should be tapped, or it may be an indication of biases or strongly held opinions which may have to be addressed as part of the process of initiating a new program. In either case, the committee's role in reality testing is usually very helpful.

Collaborative Spirit

Most parish leaders have become convinced of the need for effective collaboration within and across parish ministries. This is one of the most significant tangible results of the reforms brought about since the Second Vatican Council. It is essential then that this spirit of collaboration be extended to include parishioners as much as possible. Utilizing the parish religious education committee as a focal group for collaborative vision and planning takes seriously the letter and spirit of the Council as it is applied to the parish. The pastor or DRE who would say "I know more about religious education than anyone else in the parish, so why do I need a committee?" clearly does not understand the essential need for collaboration, and misses a very helpful resource for reality testing and ownership.

RESPONSIBILITIES

There are many responsibilities of a religious education committee, but they can be summarized in the following five areas.

Vision

The religious education committee works together to develop a broad vision of religious education and of how religious education is related to the life and mission of the parish.

Religious education is not a goal in itself. Rather, religious education exists to serve the other ministries of the parish by helping children, adolescents and adults understand the mission and ministries of the parish and to prepare themselves for participation in these ministries. Through the aims of message, community, worship and service, religious education prepares people for the fundamental ministries of the parish.

Planning

The religious education committee is the core group for doing needs identification and goal setting for the overall religious education effort in the parish. These needs and goals are then approved by the parish council and then shared with the various programs to develop specific objectives for the coming year. These objectives are put together into a cohesive plan which then guides the development of a proposed religious education budget for submission to the finance committee and the parish council. The committee reviews progress on the plan, and through a process of evaluation, uses the results to identify needs for the next planning cycle.

Communication and Coordination

The committee acts as a clearinghouse in the process of coordinating activities and scheduling facilities. The committee works to insure that each program is given the appropriate amount of resources and has appropriate access to the necessary parish facilities. The committee also keeps a sharp eye on scheduling so that families are not unnecessarily divided as they try to participate in the programs developed to serve their needs.

Policy Development

The religious education committee develops policies as they are needed

for the effective implementation of the religious education effort.

Sometimes policies are financial (tuition, program fees, collection procedures, what to do in cases when a family is unable to pay, etc.), and other times policies are related to personnel (expectations for the certification of catechists) or procedures (registration for new participants and reregistration for current participants). The committee develops and recommends policies to the appropriate person (e.g. pastor) or group (e.g. parish council) for approval.

Continuity

The religious education committee is a source of continuity for the parish religious education endeavor. Individual committee members will come and leave and DREs will come and leave, but the committee structure continues to insure that the programs do not depend only on one or two persons.

FACTORS FOR EFFECTIVENESS

There are many factors which affect a committee's effectiveness; but, there are four factors which seem to influence effectiveness more than others.

Role Description

The committee members need to know what is expected of them. A clear, concise, realistic and accurate description of their role is essential for their effectiveness. The description need not be extensive (perhaps one-half to three quarters of a page), and the major responsibilities (see previous section) need only be described in general terms. A role description is very necessary in recruiting members as well as in doing orientation and formation of committee members.

Clear Accountability

The committee members need to know to whom they are accountable. Some specific relationships may need to be spelled out.

How does the committee relate to the parish council? In most cases, the committee also serves as a committee of the parish council for matters related to religious education. Is the committee directly accountable to the pastor or is it accountable to the pastor through the DRE or other staff person? Or, does the committee relate to the pastor at all? What is the relationship to the DRE or other staff person who works with the committee? For example, is the committee accountable to this person? Does the committee advise this person? Does the committee participate in the hiring/evaluation of this person? Many different relationships and ways of insuring accountability are workable, but the committee needs to know what its accountability expectations are.

Formation/ Training

In order to be successful, the committee members need appropriate training and formation. Members new to the committee need an orientation to the role of the committee and the expectations of them as members.

Committee members need training and formation in the meaning of religious education, the aims of religious education, and the pertinent church documents. For example, committees need to know the format, purpose and appropriate use of the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. An understanding of emerging issues and trends in religious education will help them determine if programs are sensitive to the needs and pressures and responsibilities of families.

One practical way of providing ongoing formation and training may be to devote 20 minutes near the beginning of each meeting to learn about and discuss an emerging issue or need. This could be done by reading an article from *The Living Light* or other magazine or journal before the meeting and discussing it briefly during the meeting.

Support

In order to be effective the committee needs the support of the parish staff, particularly the DRE or the staff person who works with the committee, and others. The committee also needs some financial support in order to carry out its responsibilities. This financial support may include paying registrations at diocesan or regional conferences to learn more about religious education, or to cover the cost of materials used, etc. The support that comes from the parish office in typing and mailing minutes, receiving notices in sufficient time and being appreciated (a small gift at Christmas, a thank-you dinner at the end of the year, etc.) for the time and energy they give to the work of the committee is very important to the successful working of a committee.

Having an appropriate place to meet that is suited to adults (not sitting in children's desks) and having the DRE or other staff person present on time *all the time* is clearly part of supporting the committee.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership on a parish religious education committee can vary from parish to parish, but usually the membership falls into three categories.

Program Representatives

These are leaders or representatives from the various programs for children, adolescents, adults, sacramental formation, etc. Actual structures will vary from parish to parish; but, in order to have sufficient information on the programs, these programs need to be represented on the committee.

At-large Members

At-large members are those who are interested in religious education and bring a specific skill (public relations, planning, publicity, budget) to the work of the committee.

At-large members can also be people interested in religious education who represent significant groups in the parish (families, seniors, young adults). Whether a person comes with a particular skill or by reason of representation, interest in religious education is an essential requirement for membership on the committee.

Staff

Some staff member (usually the DRE when there is one) needs to be present at committee meetings because of the staff member's responsibility to assist the pastor in the day-to-day operation of the parish, and because the staff member is often responsible for carrying out the policies and programs recommended by the committee. The input of the staff from the initial discussion to the final recommendation or decision is an important resource for the committee. The staff member is also significantly responsible for providing much of the formation and training needed by the committee members.

The relationship between the committee and the staff member needs to be one of mutual interdependence. The committee needs the staff member's input, support and resource for training and planning. The staff member needs the committee for building ownership for the various catechetical programs, testing out new ideas and programs, and establishing a spirit of collaboration in planning and implementing the various programs and activities.

IMPORTANT RELATIONSHIPS

The religious education committee needs to develop several important relationships in order to operate effectively.

The Pastor

The pastor is the one responsible for providing catechesis for the adults, youth and children of the parish (cf. Canon 773). The pastor is charged to involve others in carrying out this task (also cf. Canon 773). The religious education committee is an important agent in assisting the pastor. The pastor needs to be clear about his expectations of the committee, and the pastor needs to recognize the role of the committee and the time, energy and commitment contributed by the committee members. Usually the pastor relates to the committee through the DRE or another staff person. It is very helpful and encouraging for the committee if the pastor could meet with the committee at least twice a year (perhaps at the beginning of the year and prior to the beginning of the planning and budgeting process).

The committee needs to recognize the role of the pastor and seek to assist him in carrying out his responsibilities. The actions, recommendations and decisions of the committee need to be communicated to the pastor clearly and promptly. Often this is done through the staff person who meets with the committee, but this process needs to be supplemented by having good minutes and periodic meetings (perhaps three or four times a year) of the committee chairperson with the pastor.

Parish Council

The parish council (called in some dioceses the pastoral council) is the primary body to collaborate with the pastor in developing the parish mission statement, priorities and major goals for the parish. The religious education committee needs to have a clear and effective relationship with the parish council.

In many parishes, the religious education committee serves as a standing committee of the parish council and assists the council in developing priorities and goals relating to religious education. The religious education

committee also assists the parish council by participating in the budgeting process for religious education.

The committee recognizes the role of the parish council in developing a view of the entire parish life and mission, and the committee keeps the council well informed about the committee's actions, recommendations and decisions. In those matters where the action of the committee needs the approval of the parish council (perhaps relating to the religious education budget or tuition policies, etc.), the committee takes care to give the council members the needed background information with the various options considered by the committee, along with the committee's recommendations. This must be done in a timely fashion to allow sufficient time for the council members to give the recommendations serious reflection prior to discussion and decision by the council.

Parish School Board

In those parishes with a school and a school board, the religious education committee needs to have a strong, collaborative relationship with the school board. The board and the committee need to recognize each other's roles. The board has responsibility for overseeing the overall operation of the school in collaboration with the principal. The religious education committee has responsibility for the overall religious education ministry in the parish, including formation for the sacraments. There are four areas where the religious education committee and the school board need to interact very effectively.

1. Religious Education Curriculum Development

It is essential that there be a unified and cohesive vision and philosophy for religious education in the parish. If the school has one vision and philosophy and the religious education committee has a very different one, there will be serious divisiveness in the parish, and the learners and their families will be negatively affected. Very often a vision and philosophy are practically implemented in the selection and utilization of the religious education textbook series. It is not necessary that the school and the children's religious education program use the same textbook series (some series are preferred by the catechists in the school and other series by the religious education catechists for very legitimate reasons). It is essential, however, that the texts chosen be compatible in vision and philosophy. In choosing texts, the school principal and the parish religious education staff person need to be in close collaboration, and the proposed text series for both the school and the children's religious education program should be discussed with the religious education committee. This insures that each series is in accordance with the vision and goals of the overall religious education effort in the parish.

2. Catechist Formation

The initial formation and the continuing education of both school and parish program catechists is an important element in planning and implementing the overall parish catechetical ministry. The religious education committee and the school board need to be in communication about how the expectations for catechist formation and certification are being ful-

filled. The regulations and guidelines provided by most dioceses are an important point of reference for this discussion.

3. Sacramental Formation

Both the school and the children's religious education have an important role (along with the family and the parish community) in the preparation and continuing formation for the sacraments, particularly Eucharist, Reconciliation and Confirmation (depending on the age chosen in the parish for Confirmation). However, the immediate preparation for the sacraments (the time several months prior to the celebration of the sacrament) is a responsibility of the parish because those preparing are being further initiated into the worship life of the parish. This is a time when all those preparing for a sacrament join together into one unified formation program for the immediate preparation. This is an added responsibility for everyone—those who attend the school and those who participate in the parish religious education program.

The religious education committee, in collaboration with the parish religious education staff person, have the primary responsibility for insuring that the sacramental formation program effectively initiates the candidates into more active and conscious participation in the worship life of the parish community. The school board insures that the procedures and policies of the school regarding sacramental formation foster this understanding and implementation of sacramental formation.

4. Budget Review

In the process of developing the parish religious education budget, the parish religious education committee has a responsibility to review the total religious education budget in order to assess whether the budget follows the priorities and goals of the overall religious education program. It is not the responsibility of the religious education committee to review the line-item budget of the school (that is the responsibility of the school board).

It is the responsibility of the religious education committee to be informed about the parish subsidy to the school (and/or the amount set aside for tuition assistance) in order to develop a recommendation for consideration by the parish council about the appropriate balance of funding for the various programs (including the school) that comprise the total religious education ministry of the parish.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR CONTINUAL GROWTH

There is much more that could be said about the activities of the parish religious education committee; but, that is beyond the scope of this chapter. But one final challenge: the committee never reaches a point where it can "coast" and do things the "way we did them last year." If the committee works hard to be formed and informed, there is always more to learn. If the committee has developed an effective planning process, there is always more that could be done to assess needs more thoroughly. If a committee does a good job in one particular year, it will discover new needs or there will be ways to improve one or another program. One thing

a committee can be sure of is that there will always be more to do.

Religious education committees do require time and energy on the part of the members, the parish staff and the parish council. But when the committee has a clear role description, thorough formation and strong support, the dedication, commitment and activity of the members will be a wonderful resource for energizing the life and mission of the parish.

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What Do Parish Religious Education Boards Do?

Maureen Kennedy, OP

The specific charge given to the Religious Education Board (REB) is planning the religious education program for the parish. This planning is done as a team whose membership also includes the pastor and administrator of the religious education program. Each entity of the team has its own role and, to the extent that each respects the role of the other, the planning and presentation of religious education in the parish will provide for present needs and move religious education into the future. These roles are discussed in another section of this publication.

In some parishes one administrator administers the total religious education program, while in others several persons administer the total program. Models vary widely according to the needs of parishes. For the purpose of this section the singular form, administrator, will be used allowing the reader to adapt according to local usage. Since the REB will need to be serviced by an executive secretary, in the case of several administrators, the pastor or parish council will need to appoint one administrator as executive secretary who serves on the executive committee, mails the meeting agenda and packet, initiates the setting of meeting time and place, and other necessary organizational tasks.

The REB gives direction to the total religious education program which "provides opportunities for all parishioners to encounter the gospel message and respond by fostering community and giving service keeping in mind that the whole church is missionary and that evangelization is a basic duty of God's people." (NCD, #224) This direction occurs in a planning cycle which includes needs assessment, mission statements, goals, objectives, program plans, policies, rules, finances and evaluation. Effective meetings are essential to the success of the REB. Each of these "jobs" of the REB will be considered below.

PLANNING CYCLE

Although commonly referred to as a cycle, this form of planning is more like a spiral providing optimum planning for the present three-year span while collecting information and giving time for reflection on the directions of the next three years. A planning cycle of three years consists of a mission statement, needs assessment and analysis, formation and prioritization of goals, formation of objectives and program plans, and evaluation of progress toward achievement of the goal. Ordinarily the cycle takes three years with overlapping of phases of one cycle with the next cycle. The REB is required to constantly monitor the present, evaluate the past and plan for the future. In practice the three-year cycle looks like this:

Year One
- Work on this year's objectives
- Evaluate last year's objectives
- Adjust goals if necessary
- Analyze assessment results
- Review mission statement
- Create goals for this cycle
- Create objectives and program plan for next year

Year Two
- Begin work on this year's objectives
- Evaluate last year's objectives
- Decide if the goals of the last cycle were accomplished
- Adjust present goals if necessary
- Create objectives and program plan for next year

Year Three
- Work on this year's objectives
- Evaluate last year's objectives
- Adjust goals if necessary
- Do needs assessment for next cycle
- Create objectives and program plan for next year

MISSION STATEMENT

The first step of the planning cycle is to create a mission statement for the total religious education program of the parish, or to review and perhaps revise the current mission statement. The mission statement for total religious education should refine and focus the parish mission statement for the educational mission of the parish. This statement is the product of the shared vision of the planning team: board, pastor and administrator. In the event that the parish has several offices in the total religious education program, the REB mission statement may be focused and refined for each office.

In many parishes, the parish council receives and approves the mission statement, as well as all goals, policies, budgets and evaluations. These pastoral councils are the overall direction setters and planners of their parishes.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The needs assessment at the beginning of the planning cycle can take several forms: discussions with groups of parishioners, a questionnaire given to all members of the parish, evaluations from past programs, research into programs offered by other parishes in the area, recommendations of the diocesan religious education office, etc. Information is then analyzed to determine the areas of need for the next planning cycle.

GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND PROGRAMS

The needs surfaced in the analysis of the needs assessment become the basis for the goals. A goal is broad enough to provide programming for three years, yet specific enough to be attainable. One can tell when the goal has been accomplished. For example: *The parish will do family life education.* This general statement will be hard to evaluate. It could result in a full family life education program, or a mere handing out of a pamphlet with the Sunday bulletin. More specific: *A family life program will be offered with provisions for various age groups and for various forms of family life.*

A good way to judge whether all are envisioning the meaning of a goal is to discuss what the end result(s) will look like. What will come from this goal? Only when all members of the planning team have similar end results in mind and the program administrator understands the intent of the goal should the goal be written down. Possible objectives can be discussed by the board, but the administrator and staff create the objectives and programs.

Once all of the goals have been created, the planning team prioritizes the goals. Prioritization guides allocation of funds in the budget and allocation of time and energy for the administrators. A simple form of prioritization entails each person's prioritizing. A combination of all ranking is created. The ordered goals are then discussed until a consensus is reached on the final ranking of the goals.

The administrator regularly reports to the board on the progress toward achievement of each goal. In this way the REB can evaluate the extent to which its goals are being accomplished. When necessary, goals can be edited and altered during the yearly planning cycle meeting. This should not happen often, but is sometimes necessary over a three-year span.

POLICIES

Policies enable the administrator to accomplish the goals set by the board. They are guides for action for the administrator. Policies arise from needs in the parish, from civic policy and from diocesan policy. Policies are broad statements: *The parish will offer programs for parents of children receiving the sacraments of Confirmation, first Eucharist and first Penance.* The administrator then adds regulations that specify the policy: *Parents of children preparing to receive the sacrament of Penance for the first time will attend two meetings, one at 7 p.m. on September 22 and one at 7 p.m. October 22. These meetings will enable the parents to understand their role in the preparation process.* Periodically the planning team should review their policy manual, editing where necessary. Action on policies may also be included in the regular reports of the administrator to the REB.

The REB is responsible for setting the direction and planning the total religious education program of the parish through establishing a mission

statement, goals and policies.

The administrator is responsible to achieve the goals and implement policies through establishing objectives, program plans and regulations within the mission of the REB. This includes reporting back to the board concerning these matters. Finances and evaluation are the other two responsibilities of the board.

FINANCES

The administrator submits a budget based on the program plans to fulfill the goals of the board. The REB reviews the budget, incorporating it into the total religious education budget of the REB. This budget, along with a request for financing, is presented to the parish council.

EVALUATION

Through evaluation of progress toward completion of goals, REB can determine the success of its three-year plan. The information collected at the annual evaluation should be collected and preserved as part of the material analyzed for the next planning cycle. The REB will determine how often the administrator is expected to give progress reports on goals, usually two to three times a year, plus a final progress report at the annual planning meeting.

Boards decide goals, policies, budgets and evaluation. Administrators implement goals through objectives and programs, policies through regulations. They also present financial reports two to three times a year. Boards do not allow themselves to get involved in administration.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

Using a consensus model ensures that the vision of all is reflected in the final decision; yet, it takes the time and talent of very capable, and therefore busy, persons. Effective use of the board meeting is critical. In the Archdiocese of Mobile, boards are guided by six guidelines of effective board meetings.

1. Boards Decide

The time at the board meeting cannot be spent with prolonged bemoaning of problems or discussion of everyone's opinions. The board meeting is for deciding or for preparing to decide. Each member has received a packet before the meeting with agenda, minutes of the last meeting, reports from committees and staff, and background information on issues to be considered.

2. Committees Work

All work of the board leading to decisions is done by committees before the board meeting. Committee members may include persons not on the board, but the chairperson should always be a board member. Committees write interim reports to the board as they do their research, giving board members the opportunity for clarification and input. In the final recommendation for the board's decision, the committee should give the reasons for their recommendations.

3. Agendas Govern

This is most important. A sample board agenda can be found below. Issues that will be decided at this meeting appear under OLD BUSINESS. Items under NEW BUSINESS are typically assigned to a standing or ad hoc committee by the executive committee with a clear charge and explicit timeline for progress reports and presentation to the board for decision. INFORMATION AND REPORTS provide time for staff reports, reports of other agencies and committee reports and correspondence. New concerns may arise during this time. They are placed under SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR NEW BUSINESS where they stay until the executive committee puts them into new business. If the committee decides the topic is not board business, then courtesy demands that the source of the topic be informed of the decision.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION BOARD MEETING
SAINT MARY PARISH
SEPTEMBER 20, 199x
7 - 9 P.M.

I CALL TO ORDER AND OPENING PRAYER

II RECOMMENDED ACTIONS
- A. ROUTINE MATTERS
  - 1. Roll Call
  - 2. Approval of the Minutes of August 23, 199x
- B. OLD BUSINESS
  - 1. Computerization of attendance records
  - 2. Use of the parish education center by other groups
- C. NEW BUSINESS
  - 1. Policy on eligibility for parish athletic teams

III INFORMATION AND REPORTS
- A. FROM PROFESSIONAL STAFF
  - 1. Religious Education Director
  - 2. Youth Minister
  - 3. Sacramental Preparation Director
- B. INTERIM REPORT FROM COMMITTEES
  - 1. Finance committee—preliminary salary schedule
  - 2. Planning committee—preliminary plans for the annual board retreat
- C. CORRESPONDENCE
- D. SUGGESTED TOPICS FOR NEW BUSINESS

IV FUTURE CONCERNS
- A. COMMITTEE TASKS
  - 1. Planning committee—final recommendation on board retreat
  - 2. Finance committee - salary schedule, budget
- B. FUTURE TOPICS
  - 1. Family Program
  - 2. Adult study groups

V CLOSING PRAYER AND ADJOURNMENT

NEXT MEETING: November 15, 199x

4. Executive Committees Think

The executive committee is made up of the president, vice president,

secretary and the administrator who is the executive secretary of the board. The executive committee creates the agenda which is included in the board packet sent to each board member at least ten days before each meeting. Other materials in the packet include proposals coming up for decisions at the board, background material on new business, reports from the staff and agencies, interim reports from committees, and correspondence.

5. Administrators Share

Besides the report on movement toward completion of goals and policies, administrators share on trends in the educational field for which they are responsible. Boards need this ongoing in-service to help them in goal and policy formation. The administrator can include this information within the report or may ask for a special meeting, or portion of a meeting, to give a fuller explanation of trends and developments in the field.

6. Everyone Writes

No issue should come before the board unless it is in writing. No action should be taken on an issue unless written documentation appears in the packet. All reports are written. All reports are presented to the executive committee to be included in the board packet. No oral reports should be entertained at the board, nor should reports handed out at the meeting be accepted. All reports and all requests for decisions should be presented in writing so that each member has time to study the issue, formulate questions, and come to an intelligent decision. No discussion may take place unless the topic has been introduced to the board through the agenda process.

Remaining faithful to this process will give the board the opportunity to make well informed decisions based on their common vision. Board members will be able to confer with other members of the community, carefully study board reports, question the committee after interim reports and take other steps to form their decision.

Since 1983, Maureen Kennedy, OP has held the position of Archdiocesan Director of Religious Education, Archdiocese of Mobile. She works with total education boards and religious education board/committees. She is also an instructor at Spring Hill College and Toolen Institute for Parish Service, Archdiocese of Mobile—positions she has held since 1979. Sr. Kennedy is a member of the Sinsinawa Dominicans.

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A Rainbow of Adaptations

Maria Thornton McClain

with contributions from Catherine Abeyta, Director of Religious Education, Diocese of Santa Fe; Delia Diaz, Director, Hispanic Apostolate, Archdiocese of Indianapolis; Charles Green, Member, St. Rita Board of Education, Indianapolis; Irma Isip, Asian-Pacific Catechesis, Archdiocese of Los Angeles; Diane Jackson, Director, Martin Luther King Multi-Service Center, Indianapolis; Maruja Sedano, Associate Director, Adult Education, Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

Building on long-standing church teaching, we are called to welcome the various cultures living in our country into our churches and welcome their involvement in the ministries and services that the churches offer. Therefore, it is appropriate for this publication to raise the question: "How can the board/commission concept be applied to the diverse cultures in this country?"

In reflecting on this question two critical issues emerge. One is the importance of the community's ownership of catechesis. The other is the empowering of the people by pastoral leadership.

The following adaptations to particular cultural settings are offered by persons who are from one of those groups and/or who work within one. Their comments may help those in other cultures where boards, commissions and committee meetings are not the ordinary way of governing parish religious education efforts.

The principles of community ownership of catechesis and empowerment can be applied anywhere, with understanding and sensitivity to local governance and leadership structures. Examining these local structures and providing regular and well designed training for all pastoral leaders and for potential or existing board members will yield much fruit.

The sections that follow are offered as a spark for further reflection within these and other decision making groups affecting the rainbow of peoples in this country.

AFRICAN-AMERICANS

Boards in African-American communities vary more based on whether they are in an urban, suburban or rural community, and whether the parish is large or small. In African-American communities it is important to find and listen to the natural community leaders and for the pastoral leadership to be supportive of lay participation and leadership.

The work of the board must be significant and have a clear relationship to the mission of the Church. In this way the members will feel comfortable that they are making a real contribution to the life of the Church. Even urban or rural people who are struggling economically will put forth much effort on a board if they feel that they are being taken seriously by the pastoral leadership and are accepted and welcomed by the rest of the members of the board and the parish.

African-American parishes often have a holistic approach to ministry. It is especially important to incorporate community service, liturgical expression and community-building aspects into educational leadership groups and programs. Selection of board/commission members should be based on finding people who have a deep commitment to the catechetical ministry as well as the ability to do the work of the board. This must be followed by regular training so that the people have a clear understanding of their roles and how they relate to the pastoral leadership in a way that builds up the whole community.

African-Americans who are members of parishes made up of a majority of people from other cultures should be sought out for participation on religious education boards/commissions so that their perspective can influence the catechetical program and assure that texts and other materials are inclusive.

ASIAN AND PACIFIC PEOPLES

In many ways, it is unfair to combine this large group of people with different languages and very distinct cultures into one category. Often the only thing besides their Catholic faith that people from these different countries have in common is merely the similar geographic location of their country of origin. It is important for parish leaders to be sensitive to the past experiences of each group and why they came to this country. For example, the Cambodian people fled their country because of genocide. The Hmong people had to be taken out of Vietnam for their own safety after the Vietnam War.

People who joined the Catholic church in refugee camps experienced the church through the goodness of the priests, sisters and agency workers who helped them. They have a very difficult time when they come to this country and experience the church as an institution that no longer has time to help them deal with the complexity of our society and governmental agencies. Often the very people who sponsored them have trouble accepting them into parish life once they are here.

During the first few years after immigration to this country "pastoral catechesis" is important. This means learning the needs of the newcomers, providing advocacy for them with the various agencies they must deal with, and providing for their spiritual needs, including a sense of belonging to a church that cares about them. Parish leaders must see God in the rituals and celebrations of the particular Asian or Pacific people. Then they

will be able to discern the catechetical moment. One way to find that moment is through experiencing, accepting and including their celebrations and music into parish catechetical programs so that the people feel welcomed and accepted.

To incorporate Asian or Pacific people into a catechetical board or commission structure, it is helpful to understand their traditional leadership structures. To Pacific islanders, leadership is very tribal and traditional. The chief is the leader. If there is no one in the group who is the natural leader, the people may need help in choosing a leader. In Chinese and Japanese cultures the teacher is the most important authority and showing respect to that person is very important. However, Americans need to know that these people show respect in their culture by lowering their eyes when being reprimanded or when an authority figure, such as a teacher, talks to them about something significant.

It is important to personally invite Asian people to participate in a leadership body and not just put notices in the bulletin. They will not respond until they are convinced that the person or group inviting is not just being polite, but really desires their participation. This can only be communicated through personal contact. Much of Asia is mission territory and its people have a different experience of church—not as an institution or a group with structures—but as a community. Direct contact is important. In working with recent immigrants it is important to be inviting because hospitality is one of their chief images of God. Asian people are often not very verbal. Feeling is more important than thinking. They experience God through what they feel as good and beautiful.

In general, parish leadership must be sensitive to the rituals and forms of leadership within the particular group of people from an Asian or Pacific country and make adaptations to their cultures and needs. Host parishes need to be patient and tolerant, giving the newcomers space to adapt to the new culture.

HISPANICS

The most important distinction to make when considering how to incorporate Hispanic people into the governance structures of parish catechetical programs is to determine whether they are recent Spanish speaking immigrants, if they have been in this country for a while and are becoming inculturated, or if they have been here for several generations and are bilingual and/or English-speaking Hispanics.

The primary difficulties for recent Spanish-speaking immigrants in participating in parish consultative groups are based on language barriers and on poverty. Most newcomers are not familiar with our culture and social structures or do not have facility with the English language. Thus they do not show interest in the type of work done by a board. Also, many Spanish-speaking Hispanics move often and do not feel that their ideas or contributions are accepted in this country. Recent immigrants often live at a survival level and need to be nurtured and assisted by the Church. Usually, they prefer to belong to faith communities where Spanish is spoken, rather than go to "English-speaking meetings."

The best way to get input regarding the religious education needs of the Spanish-speaking community as a basis of setting a direction for programs

is through those recruited from among them to be catechists. Most catechists from this group are also parents. They can give advice to the DRE or program coordinator from their perspective and thus serve in an advocacy role if their opinions are sought and respected.

Those who are learning to speak English and are becoming inculturated into American ways are more easily involved in boards, committee meetings, and other activities of the mainstream of the parish as long as they are made to feel welcome.

It is important that both the board or commission and the catechetical leader value, respect and get to know the culture of the particular Hispanic group because each cultural group has different thinking patterns and needs. Furthermore, it is a major challenge for people to understand the leadership styles of a different country and be able to participate effectively. Therefore, training of new board members needs to be carefully planned and paced.

The majority of English-speaking Hispanics (Mexican-Americans, Cuban-Americans, etc.) who have been in this country for generations and are assimilated into the culture and social structure of America frequently participate in boards, commissions and committee meetings in the parish and society at large. An invitation to these people to join a board/commission would be part of an overall philosophy of recruiting people who represent the diversity present within the parish and possess the interests and talents needed to perform the work of the group.

NATIVE-AMERICANS

There is a great variety of governance structures on reservations and in both rural and urban areas where Native American populations are found. To be successful, any parish or mission religious education governance body must respect tribal leadership and operate within the particular leadership structure of the community. For example, is there a consideration of introducing and establishing models of leadership and decision making compatible with matriarchal societies, which are not the norm either in the American experience or in the institutional church?

It is most important that the faith life of the people be nurtured from within their own culture and not imposed from another. It is a proven fact that, for centuries, Native Americans have been over-institutionalized through federally established schools, hospitals and a variety of programs, as well as institutions of all kinds founded by the church. Native Americans have had little or no input into the purposes or governance of those institutions which were established to help them. The result has been a lack of self-esteem, motivation, self-determination and trust of the "establishment." This offers an even greater challenge to the formation of effective governance boards within Native American communities.

In Native American cultures people experience their identity in relationship to other people and to the earth. Care should be taken in leadership training to explain church teachings, especially in regard to authority, in relational terms. In this way, Native Americans will see how the church teachings respect their traditional values.

Training of board members is most effective when this connection between church teachings and traditional values is incorporated with an

explanation of the basic principles and tasks of catechesis, as found, for example, in the *National Catechetical Directory*, or other church documents. Goals, objectives and strategies for developing catechetical programs would then be developed by the people themselves, assisted by those already trained in catechetical leadership. The reciprocal process of inculturation of church teachings and traditional values is the most important element to be considered in this effort so that there is a coming together of faith and culture without one overburdening the other.

Care should be taken against the assumption that methods and resources which are appropriate to a particular reservation will be appropriate in another. Tribes vary greatly throughout the country not just in language, but also in their perceptions of society and the environment, and their expressions in custom, story, music, movement and symbol. Thus, programs, methods and resources need to be developed by the catechetical leaders and catechists in collaboration with elders and other family members.

Through sincere invitation, empowerment and mentoring, local Native American leaders will indeed participate in boards or commissions which govern their catechetical programs. In this way church leaders and members from other cultures will come to know who the native peoples are and how their spirituality, customs and social reality are not in conflict, but often very much in harmony with Catholic Christian values.

Mutual accountability within a board or similar group will include demonstrating that the inculturated catechetical resources and methods really apply to the catechetical principles and tasks as well as achieve the goals of the program. At the same time, a harmonious integration of the tribal history and culture must be ensured. The pastoral leader's role is to encourage and to empower the people. This will lead to the development of grassroots processes that will help Native Americans reclaim and enhance their sacred ways within the life of the church.

CONCLUSION

A parish religious education board/commission or its equivalent can work in any culture. The main ingredients for success include understanding and sensitivity to that culture and a desire on the part of the pastoral leadership to develop and collaborate with leadership structures within the church community. This will include providing training to all board/commission members so that the people will be able to influence in an informed manner the handing on of the faith that they love so deeply. In this way, community ownership of catechesis is truly achieved; all will participate in a process of mutual discovery of God's saving presence.

Professional Growth Day For Parish Catechetical Leaders re: Religious Education Boards

Joanne Spisso Sanders and James P. Studdert

The following agenda was used to introduce and encourage the formation of religious education boards. It was presented in a three-hour workshop with a 15-minute break. Examples and stories have not been included, but are strongly recommended within the presentation. The workshop was interactive, allowing participants to dialogue with the presenters and with one another.

AGENDA FOR WORKSHOP

I **Call to Order and Prayer (5 minutes)**

II **History of Board Movement (10 minutes)**
a. Why we are where we are

III **Principles of Board Governance (10 minutes)**
a. Church Documents

IV **Models of Boards (20 minutes)**

V **Membership (5 minutes)**

VI **Relationships (20 minutes)**
a. Board to Pastoral Council, Finance Council, Other Diocesan/Parish Leaders, Pastor

VII **Mission Statement, Goals and Objectives (15 minutes)**
a. Constitution & Bylaws
b. Setting Time of Meetings

VIII **Policy/Diocesan Policy (20 minutes)**

IX **Agenda (10 minutes)**

X **Committee Work (15 minutes)**

XI **Evaluation (15 minutes)**
a. Board
b. Program
c. Administrator(s)
d. Executive Officer

XII **Resources (5 minutes)**

XIII **Questions (10 minutes)**

I **CALL TO ORDER AND PRAYER** (5 minutes)

II **HISTORY OF BOARD MOVEMENT: WHY WE ARE WHERE WE ARE** (10 minutes)

The board movement in the Catholic church started shortly after the publication of the Documents of Vatican II. *Lumen Gentium* exhorts pastors to "recognize and promote the dignity and responsibility of the laity of the church. They should willingly use their prudent advice...and give them the courage to undertake works on their own initiative...." In the *Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity,* the Council Fathers "...exhort the laity to take a more active part...and (the laity) should develop the habit of working in the

parish in close union with their priests, bringing before the ecclesial community their own problems and questions regarding salvation, to examine them together and solve them by general discussion."[1]

About this same time, state education agencies across the United States were telling superintendents of Catholic schools that if they wanted to be accredited they must have a school board. First diocesan school boards were set up and parish school boards followed. As this developed, the National Conference of Catholic Bishops saw the same need for catechetical programs and religious education boards evolved.

This process was reaffirmed by the *Revised Code of Canon Law* which addresses the common status for all in the church, based on their baptism and directed toward their involvement in the mission of the church. Although it does not specifically call for a school board, religious education board or board of education, pastors are challenged to foster among the laity an understanding of and involvement in shared responsibility and the planning that is appropriate for both pastoral action and the mission of the church at both diocesan and parish levels.

Hence, we have boards which provide the parish with a representative body for identifying and articulating the educational needs and aspirations of the parish. These needs are called goals which become the basis for program objectives and policies for the total religious education programs of the parish.

III PRINCIPLES OF BOARD GOVERNANCE (10 minutes)

Within the context of busy parishes, the question surfaces, "Why have a board?" It is said, things seem to be progressing in a satisfactory manner. The DRE is functioning just fine without the added burden of parents telling her/him what to do. In our society today when time is a valued commodity and working parents do not provide the volunteer force we once had, why bother with another meeting.

A look at the purpose and function of boards can help us to see their value in the church today. The following are principles for church governance.

A Shared Mission

Our church is a communion of persons called to belief in Jesus. Through our baptism each of us is invited to respond to the message of Jesus to be His disciple. By discerning the gifts given to each of us through the power of the Holy Spirit and being responsible for them, we can proclaim the good news of the gospel. In loving service as a community of believers, we share in Jesus' mission.

The Second Vatican Council emphasized the role of the laity in sharing in the mission of the church. Guided by scripture and tradition, we are called to pursue our common mission. Vatican II affirmed the nature of the church as a pilgrim people striving to grow in faith, to build up the community, to become a sign or leaven in the world. Participating as the Body of Christ, we seek solutions to the world's problems. Therefore, participation in a board can better utilize the gifts and talents of the Body in an energy-efficient way.

B Participation

Each person has a right and a duty to participate according to his/her vocation and gifts. This includes clergy, religious and laity who are in formal and informal ministry.

C Discernment of Shared Vision

Each person is called to assess his/her ability to dedicate himself/herself to effective leadership for the spiritual well-being of those served. Some boards use a process of discernment to select board members. This process of prayer and reflection brings the lay apostolate into ministry in a special way.

D Collaboration

The parish is the central place in the church where the community worships together, grows in love and compassion, discovers the meaning of the gospel and lives that meaning from day to day in the ordinariness of our lives.

Leadership is critical to the formation and transmission of faith. The formal leadership of a parish, namely the clergy and professional staff, are in concert with the Body of Christ to bring about a shared ministry toward mission. Persons called to board ministry should have the knowledge and ability to work with others. They should have a good personal identity as well as good interpersonal and managerial skills.

E Pastoral Planning

Representative members come together to work toward what is needed to provide unity, stability and direction in the education mission of the church. Board participation should allow for planning that is open to the Spirit, in the context of prayer. Therefore, it is important to spend time praying together. Begin each meeting with prayer and reflection. It is the Word of God that will lead us to become collaborative in our desire to work as the Body of Christ.

Church documents can assist a board in its understanding of the mission with which it has been entrusted. The Documents of Vatican II, *To Teach As Jesus Did, Sharing the Light of Faith, General Catechetical Directory, Serving Life & Faith, Adult Catechesis in the Christian Community, Catechesis Tradendae* are but a few. It would be helpful for board members to read and discuss these documents together. Each meeting should include prayer, education of the board, planning and discussion.

The board's work should include a catechetical plan, articulated mission statement, goals and objectives for the catechetical effort of the parish. The board should be responsible for seeing to the development of adequate programs and funding, and assisting with ongoing evaluation.

F Justice

The board is called to be a primary agent of just treatment of personnel, catechists, parents, youth, etc. Through clear policies and

procedures articulated by the board, protection of rights and an appropriate grievance process would be evident.

G Formal and Informal Relationships

Specifications of authority and accountability, the roles of the pastor and administrator(s), as well as the Parish Pastoral Council, Parish Finance Council (and Catholic School Board) should be defined. Communication, collaboration and support within the community are very important. (See Relationships)

H Subsidiary

A board, through the participation of the community, makes decisions at the lowest possible level. This allows for ownership on the part of a larger number of the community.

I Accountability

The board is representative of the community. The professional staff is accountable to the pastor as their employer. The professional staff is responsible for providing the board with information to allow them to formulate needed policy, provide for appropriate funding and move the vision of educational ministry forward in the parish. The board should evaluate the overall catechetical mission of the parish but the administra-tion of the program is the responsibility of the administator(s). (See Evaluation at the end of this chapter.)

IV MODELS OF BOARDS (20 minutes)

The bishop of a diocese has the responsibility as chief catechist. He delegates to the pastor the responsibility of a geographic area to teach, sanctify and govern the faithful as members of the parish and the universal church. In accordance with the Code of Canon Law and the teachings of the church especially in matters of religious education, all boards are consultative in nature. Unlike governmental boards of education, the church is not a democracy in this regard.[2]

Models for both religious education boards and boards of education responsible for Catholic schools and religious education programs can be found in the resource, *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church, CACE/NABE Governance Task Force* (see bibliography) and in Appendices A through D of this publication.

V MEMBERSHIP (5 minutes)

The DRE can be a change agent in the parish by encouraging board formation and action. The DRE can motivate the community by inviting participation in board work.

Criteria for membership on a board is as follows:

- Be a member of the parish
- Be eighteen years or older
- Be interested in Catholic education
- Have the ability to work effectively with others in achieving consensus

- Have the ability and willingness to make a substantial time commitment
- Have a high level of integrity and confidentiality
- Attend in-service programs
- Support the philosophy and mission of the parish
- Have a sense of a future vision for church/parish
- Be a credible witness of the Catholic faith
- Not be a paid/volunteer employee or spouse/parent/child of an employee
- Not be a student

Consideration should be given to a discernment process for new members to the board rather than a process of election.

Board members should be given an orientation, ongoing in-services, time for prayer and reflection, a notebook with pertinent church documents, policies of the diocese and parish, minutes of past meetings and any other pertinent information helpful to assist the board member in his/her work.

. Membership on the board would also include the pastor and the administrator(s) (DRE, Principal and Youth Minister). These participants are ex-officio members of the board. One of the administrators serves as the executive officer of the board. Rotation of this responsibility may take place on an annual basis. The executive officer works with the executive committee to plan the agenda and serves as the liaison between the board, pastor and other administrators. The board is consultative to the pastor and administrator(s).

VI BOARD RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

(20 minutes)

Besides relationships within the board, there are relationships with other parish groups that need consideration.

A The Parish Board and the Director of Religious Education/Pastor

The DRE is an agent of the pastor. The professional leader should have an agreement from the pastor which includes a job description, stated salary and benefits. The DRE is responsible directly to the pastor and should be evaluated on a regular basis by the pastor. The DRE is responsible for providing an environment for the teaching of religious education, the building of community, opportunities for worship and for service. This would also include program administration, personnel and budget. The DRE is accountable to the board for reporting program administrative needs and progress, financial status and fulfillment of policy requirements.

The board, at the direction of the pastor, may assist the pastor as a search committee to ascertain possible candidates for the position of DRE. The search committee would compile a profile of the parish; assist in the formulation of a job description, receive the applications and help with the reference check as well as assist in the screening of the candidates. The board would then recommend to the pastor their top choices. It is the pastor's responsibility to hire the DRE.

B The Parish Religious Education Board and the Catholic School Board

Should there be a Catholic school within the parish, communication and accountability are imperative. Depending on the structure designated by the pastor, the religious education staff person, working with the principal, may be responsible for the religious education within the Catholic school, or the religion coordinator in the Catholic school may oversee the religious education in the school. Whatever the circumstance, the religious education program and the Catholic school religion program should complement one another. There may be times, such as in the preparation and reception of sacraments, where both the religious education department and the Catholic school should be working together. The catechetical plan for the parish should be shared by both the religious education department and the Catholic school.

A parish may have a total board of education (see models section) or a parish may have a separate school board and a separate religious education board. Liaisons between the two entities are extremely important. Policies of the parish should represent both programs.

C The Parish Board and the Diocesan Board of Education

There is a complementary relationship between the parish board and the diocesan board. Mutual communication and accountability should prevail. Policies developed at the local level must be consistent with diocesan policies and filed with the Diocesan Board of Education. The parish board should submit copies of its constitution and bylaws, policy manual or handbook and a current roster of board members to the diocesan board.

D The Parish Board and the Parish Pastoral Council

The education policies and goals for education should be consistent with the parish mission and goals. The Parish Board should seek advice and input from the parish Pastoral Council when deliberating policies, goals and major decisions. The Parish Board will provide regular information to the parish Pastoral Council concerning the policies, goals, objectives and upcoming major events. The board will present an annual report to the Pastoral Council on the accomplishment of the educational goals and objectives, the effectiveness of the educational policies and the financial status of the educational ministry.

E The Parish Board and the Parish Finance Council

The administrator(s) of the educational program(s) will prepare the budget(s) in terms of expenditures with a rationale which justifies any item required or requested. The Parish Board will analyze and approve the proposed budget(s) which serves as the financial expression of the educational plan. The board will then present the budget(s) to the parish Finance Council as the educational component of the total parish budget. The Finance Council's concern is with the requested parish subsidy. The Finance Council may approve the parish subsidy or direct the board to change the parish subsidy for education. Thus, it is at the

level of subsidy that the Finance Council exercises its authority and not in the areas of policy, hiring the administrator(s), setting tuition rates and fees, or establishing the budget.

F The Parish Board and the Parent Organization

Although more common in a school setting, parent organizations can support the efforts of religious education in a parish. Parent organizations are established in order to provide an opportunity for parents to meet together and build unity, promote understanding and communication, improve their skills and effectiveness in parenting, and promote moral as well as financial support for the programs. The board and the parent organization fulfill different but complementary roles. The board should seek input from the parent organization regarding policy issues which will affect them. The board should present an annual report to the parent organization regarding the accomplishment of the educational goals and objectives, the effectiveness of the educational policies, and the financial status of the program(s).

VII MISSION STATEMENT, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS, SETTING TIME OF MEETINGS (15 minutes)

Now that we know how boards got started and what purpose they serve, let's look at what they do and how they do it.

Boards are planners and policy makers. Policy making will be discussed in the next section. The following six steps make up the planning process:

A **Begin with a mission statement which will state who you are, what is your purpose of existence, whom you serve, and what you do.** The mission statement is what motivates, articulates a clear vision and helps perceive single acts in terms of a larger plan.

How do you prepare a mission statement for Catholic education?

1. Identify those to whom Catholic education is accountable.
2. Review church documents such as *To Teach As Jesus Did, Sharing the Light of Faith, the Declaration on Christian Education, the Diocesan Mission Statement on Catholic Education* and your own Parish Mission Statement.
3. Individually, list the elements that should be addressed and why.
4. As a group, prepare a draft; each member share (3) above; list common elements; list differences; discuss differences; decide what to include; ask a volunteer to write a draft.
5. Group discusses draft; ask a volunteer to write a revision.
6. Group finalizes the statement.
7. Submit to consultation.
8. Revise based on consultation.
9. Finalize.
10. Promulgate, then review regularly to see if it is still valid for your parish community.

B Assess needs.

C Articulate goals.
A goal is a clearly defined, constructive statement of a desired result (direction) in general terms to be accomplished in three to five years.

D Formulate objectives.
An objective is a short-range step toward the attainment of a goal and is measurable, realistic and action oriented.

E Establish performance requirements and implement action plans.
WHO will do WHAT, WHEN and at WHAT COST to achieve the objective/goal.

F Evaluate.
Make sure that the goals and objectives adhere to the Mission Statement and are getting the parish community where it wants to be.

Your constitution and bylaws are the rules and regulations (the how-to) of board operation. The constitution usually covers the nature and function of the board, membership, officers, meetings, committees and amendments. The bylaws then take each area and further elaborate in greater detail. As an example, the section on Members would spell out eligibility, the method of election or discernment, term of office, and installation of new members. Often, a guideline or sample constitution and bylaws may be obtained from the archdiocese/diocese.

VIII POLICY/DIOCESAN POLICY (20 minutes)

A policy is a "guide for discretionary action." It is a broad and general direction given to the DRE. A policy, furthermore, is the expression of the religious education board's mind and intention regarding some aspect of educational organization or operation. In this expression, the board is giving voice, in fact, to the mind of the faith community which it represents, and is reflecting that community's vision and value system.

Policy states WHAT is to be done, but NOT HOW, WHEN or BY WHOM. A policy is a response to a need. Most often the need for policy will be suggested by the DRE, who is in the best position to be aware of these needs. However, the need for policy may be surfaced by the board itself, the pastor or the community. Policy is the product, not of an individual's efforts, but of the deliberations and collective wisdom of all the members of the board.

A policy formulation process follows:

A A policy need (problem) is brought to the appropriate administrator.

B The administrator researches the problem and prepares a briefing paper which:

1. identifies main issues;

2. states alternative courses of action, along with anticipated consequences;

3. gives a recommendation for action.

C The board receives the policy recommendation along with all the data and documents before the meeting at which it first appears on the agenda.

D A policy need (problem) is presented and a policy recommendation given a "first reading." Board members ask information-seeking questions.

E If the problem affects certain groups significantly or if it is controversial, the board asks the administrator to arrange for a suitable consultation to receive input from those who will be affected.

F Amendments or other changes are made in the proposed policy.

G A final draft of the policy receives a "second reading" at the board meeting.

H Final action is taken.

I The policy is given to the pastor for his signature.

J The policy is codified.

K The policy is circulated to the public and those who are affected by the policy.

L The policy is evaluated regularly.

Local policies cannot be in disagreement or contradict diocesan policy. Normally, diocesan policy is very broad, thus enabling the local religious education board to pass a more specific policy that pertains to the particular parish situation.

IX AGENDA (10 minutes)

When preparing an agenda, note on the left hand side of the page the times designated for each part of the agenda. This gives everyone an understanding of where they are in the meeting and helps people stay focused. The meeting begins and ends with prayer. It is recommended that a calendar for the year be prepared with prayer assignments for each meeting. This enables everyone to share his/her faith with the group. Remember, address all action (decision) items before moving on to the information items. From then on, it is strictly information and reminders.

The agenda should be mailed with a packet of information for the Board at least one week prior to the meeting. The packet should include the minutes of the last meeting as well as written reports from staff and all committees. All reports should be read and studied prior to the meeting, thereby saving time listening or reading reports unnecessarily at the meeting. Evaluation is suggested in order that each person express any problems they have had with how the meeting was conducted or to compliment a committee or individual.

Some cardinal rules: "Thou shalt never have an oral report." "Thou shalt not accept written reports handed out at the meeting." All reports are mailed in the packet prior to the meeting or they are not made.

The agenda is prepared by the executive committee which is comprised of the president, vice-president, secretary and executive officer. The execu-

tive officer will have gained information for the agenda from the pastor and other administrators prior to the executive committee meeting.

X COMMITTEES (15 minutes)

Committees are identified in the constitution and bylaws. Committees are either standing committees or ad hoc committees. A standing committee provides a continuing function for ongoing operation of the board. Examples would be membership, finance, executive and public relations. An ad hoc committee is established to meet a specific objective at a given time. Examples would be a search committee for a new DRE or a nominating committee for officers and/or new members.

Any committee needs to be charged by the Executive Committee with its tasks spelled out in detail, a timeline for interim reports and a deadline for when the tasks should be completed. It is recommended that the vice-president be charged with the responsibility of committees to ensure that they meet, that they turn in their reports in a timely manner to be mailed in the agenda packet and to make sure they finish their tasks on time.

Committees should be chaired by board members, but it would be advantageous to have several non-board members on each committee. This is a good recruiting/training tool for future board members as well as adding to the public relations effort of the board.

XI EVALUATION (15 minutes)

The board:

- sets goals and objectives for itself and evaluates whether these goals and objectives have been met;
- determines its own effectiveness;
- evaluates the executive officer and other administrator's service to the board (It does not evaluate the administrator(s) on his/her job performance.);
- assesses the implementation of policy;
- participates in a process of evaluating the educational programs in the parish.

The National Catechetical Directory, Sharing the Light of Faith states: Catechetical programs should be subjected to regular evaluation. The evaluation should be made in light of established goals and objectives, which themselves should be evaluated periodically. (#222)[3] The board should evaluate the religious education program of the parish in light of this directive.

XII RESOURCES (5 minutes)

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The CACE/NABE Governance Task Force, *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*, National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, DC, 1987.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did*, Washington, DC, 1972.

National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Sharing the Light of Faith, National Catechetical Directory for Catholics of the United States*, 1978.

XIII QUESTIONS (10 minutes)

Joanne Spisso Sanders has served the Diocese of Galveston-Houston (Houston, TX) as Director of the Office of Continuing Christian Education since 1987. A member of the Diocesan Board of Education, she has coordinated parish and school religious education programs and presented workshops on religious education boards in the Houston area for over 20 years.

James P. Studdert is a lay volunteer at the parish and diocesan level, having served in such capacities as CCE Coordinator (seven years), Adult Education Coordinator (12 years) and Pastoral Council Representative (including president). On the diocesan level he has sat on the Diocesan Board of Education (seven years), Inner City School Committee (five years) and the Diocesan Finance Council (ten years and currently its chairman). In the Diocese of Galveston-Houston, he has been a consultant to boards for seven years.

[1]Sheehan, Lourdes, RSM, *Building Better Boards*, National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, DC, 1990.

[2]O'Brien, Stephen J. Ed., *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*, CACE/ NABE, 1987.

[3]*National Catechetical Directory*, United States Catholic Conference, Washington, DC, 1979.

An Effective Way for a Pastor and DRE to Support the Board of Education

Mary Jo Thomas-Day

It is a phenomenal task to work with a group of individuals with a variety of gifts and talents for the enrichment of a larger body. To continue to believe that each person in that group is gifted and called to minister to the church is another challenge. The pastor and DRE work with and support a variety of parish groups. One of these groups is the board of education. This body is a vibrant part of the parish and calls upon the pastor and DRE to help it operate at its potential by being challenging and effective.

The board can only effectively fulfill its role to initiate and implement policy, report to the parish about the educational programs, prepare budgets and deepen its own awareness of the needs of all the aspects of Catholic education when the pastor and DRE work with and support it. How this is done varies from parish to parish. This chapter offers recommendations based on what has worked in one parish to enrich relationships and promote the productivity of the board.

PASTORAL TEAM

Our pastoral team, which consists of the pastor, associate pastor, business manager, principal, youth minister and DRE, meets every week. These meetings begin with "quiet time" to organize our agenda. This is followed by shared prayer, then the formal part of the meeting. We end with lunch together. Each week we change the facilitator (we found going alphabetically works effectively). The facilitator is charged with leading the prayer and meeting. The form of prayer varies with each person, is a reflection of that person's own prayer style and usually lasts at least a half hour. One of the agenda items is always a report regarding the board of education, either presenting what occurred at the previous meeting or discussing items for the next one.

ROLE MODELS

The greatest contribution that both the pastor and DRE can make to the board of education is being role models. One of the greatest gifts they can share with the board is their gift of prayer. Because the board is a Catholic Christian community, it must have Christ at its center and focal point. By the way they live, the pastor and DRE are called to reflect this and lead the board to permeate its meetings with prayer.

PRAYER

The role of the pastor and DRE is to guide the group to develop the habit of beginning each meeting with prayer, pausing for prayer in the midst of challenging discussions or conflict, and ending the meeting with prayer. In this way, the board will discover God's power within it and will call forth that power when making decisions. *(How often in our scriptures does Jesus stop in the midst of conflict to pray, reflect and then act!)* This does not mean a board waits until conflict to pray, but realizes God's power is always present.

In order for the board to feel comfortable with the various forms of prayer, it is suggested that an evening of reflection or day of renewal be held at the beginning of each year, when new members are introduced into this group. The purpose of this time together could be both social and spiritual. It could include reflecting on how to direct one's talents to the ministry of the board. The evening or day could be planned by a committee of the board with the DRE. The retreat could be facilitated by a non-board member in order that all board members may fully participate.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Another way for the pastor and DRE to support the board is by guiding it in the exercise of leadership. One aspect of this is to encourage comfortable and productive meetings with an environment where all members feel equal and not controlled by the leadership. Specific strategies in this area would be to encourage the elimination of a podium or tables that separate the group. If possible, all members should sit around circular tables, able to see and communicate with each other. A focal point, such as a candle in the center, can remind them they are a reflection of Christ's life and love.

Other ways to encourage leadership development and productive meetings would be to prepare the president for situations when a discussion gets off track, encouraging her/him to remind the group of its purpose and expectations and to take ownership of the issues discussed. The pastor and DRE can demonstrate the value of working collectively, by respecting and listening to each one's point of view, and encouraging them in forming a position or policy. In this way, the pastor and DRE can help facilitate leadership development. When this occurs, the board is able to fashion a vision that they themselves are a part of the body of Christ with a common goal and purpose. They become a cohesive group of individuals who function as a unified team. In addition, the pastor and DRE are expressing a vital support for the board by helping it accept challenges presented to them with a loving Christian response.

An Effective Way for a Pastor and DRE to Support the Board

TRUST

The pastor, DRE and board must establish trust among each other. The trust, which may take some time to establish, is one that is attained through believing in the integrity and dignity of each person and expecting each one to act accordingly. The pastor and DRE begin by modeling this belief through their attitudes and actions. For her/his part, the DRE regularly describes to the board the programs that have been planned, implemented and evaluated. The board is then able to realize through the success of these efforts that they can put trust in the DRE. The DRE becomes aware of the board's encouragement and support for these programs. The mutual trust established among all board members enables them to work more effectively for the good of total Catholic education in the parish.

Trust is lost when issues are discussed in the parking lot after meetings or on the phone instead of during the meeting. Trust is found when members learn to listen, care, accept good decisions, know they are accepted with dignity and share a common ministry on the board. The pastor and DRE support the board when they establish and promote trust among its members.

LISTENING

In the Christian Scriptures, we read the story of Martha and Mary. Boards of education have to be both Martha and Mary, listeners and workers. Few people realize that 42 percent of one's time is spent listening, which is one of the most difficult of communication skills. To listen effectively, one must use both head and heart. To be an example of this, the pastor and DRE listen to each member with an open mind, willing to try new ideas. This encourages the members to listen to facts, principles, concepts and main ideas with a nonjudgmental attitude and make a conscientious effort to focus on the ideas being expressed.

If a person dominates a meeting with "talk" and seems to be always preparing their response before someone's presentation is complete, then the pastor or DRE can gently (but firmly) remind the person that listening is a vital part of their meeting and should be adhered to by each member. The pastor or DRE can also encourage the establishment of group norms that support good listening habits.

AFFIRMATION

Affirmation of the individuals on the board in their ministry is another aspect of the pastor's and DRE's support. This has a two-fold effect since affirmation, when given genuinely, has positive responses from both parties involved. Generally, the results of the work accomplished by both board and DRE are more effective. In addition, if affirmation is modeled by the pastor and DRE by giving positive feedback at meetings, other members will follow this pattern.

Remarks such as "thank you," "you're doing a terrific job," "keep up the good work," "I'm glad you are here," "you are a gift to us", etc. go a long way to boost a person's self-confidence. A pat on the back and words of affirmation at a meeting should be given often with sincerity and love.

VISION

Finally, the pastor and DRE support and work with the board by living in the present while dreaming or visioning the future. It is of major importance in their everyday leadership role to have in mind a vision beyond what is currently possible, a vision that will act as a guide to the future in the area of religious education.

One example would be in the area of assisting adults to live fully a Catholic Christian life. This could be accomplished through emphasizing life-long learning. The DRE would offer this vision to the board and assist in forging a common image of the future for the good of the persons served by the programs and the building of the reign of God. The DRE would follow up by challenging the board to support program opportunities that lead to the fulfillment of this vision.

In summary, the pastor and DRE work with and support the board of education by being who they are as persons who are role models in prayer, by facilitating leadership, by establishing trust among and with board members, by listening with an open mind and heart, and by being affirming to the members.

The DRE presents to the parish the best religious education programs that are realistically possible while challenging the board to develop an even better vision of the future.

The pastor exercises leadership by direct input to the board and by showing confidence in its leadership, based on open communication and shared vision. In this way, the gifts of all persons in parish leadership in religious education are nurtured and coordinated for the good of the whole parish.

Mary Jo Thomas-Day has served as Director of Religious Education at St. Monica Parish in Indianapolis, Indiana since 1977. A catechist for 30 years, she also taught the primary unit at schools in Indiana and Illinois. Ms. Thomas-Day has been a member of St. Monica's Board of Total Catholic Education for the past 17 years and is a past member of similar Boards at Holy Cross Central School and West Deanery.

Appendix A

Sample constitution for a religious education board or commission *in a parish with a separate school board. In this model the board or commission is consultative with authority to make decisions in certain areas with the pastor's approval. This constitution is based on a combination of models from the Archdiocese of Baltimore and the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.*

CONSTITUTION FOR PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMISSION

PREAMBLE

The Catholic community of the parish of _____, committed to the catechetical principle that "the entire community is responsible for catechesis," as expressed in the document, *A Vision for the Catechetical Ministry: An Instrument for Diocesan and Parish Planning,* establishes this constitution.

ARTICLE I - NAME

Section 1 The name of this body shall be the Religious Education Commission (Board) of the Parish of _____, hereinafter referred to as the commission.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 1 The pastor and parish pastoral council establish this commission as consultative to the pastor in the area of religious education.

Section 2 The commission shall be responsible to the pastor and the parish pastoral council for the following: the long-range development of the parish's religious education efforts; the development of policies to guide the DRE; the review and approval of the religious education budget; assistance in the hiring of the DRE; reporting on the status of parish religious education to the pastoral council; and directing the implementation of (Arch)diocesan policy in the parish.

Section 3 The following shall be the areas of responsibility: catechist/teacher formation; initiation of adults and children; adult faith enrichment; youth catechesis; elementary catechesis;

pre-school/early childhood catechesis; Catholic school (promoting the school as an integral component of the parish religious education ministry and including school in its religious education planning, budgeting and policy development); family-oriented programs; and religious education for those with disabilities.

ARTICLE III - RELATIONSHIPS

Section 1 The commission shall assist the pastor with religious education by carrying out the responsibilities listed above. All decisions of the commission shall be approved by the pastor.

Section 2 The chairperson of the commission shall be a member of the pastoral council and seek input from the council regarding goals, policies and major decisions. The chairperson shall submit the commission's goals and budget to the council for approval and make a yearly report of progress on goals.

Section 3 The commission shall share responsibility for religious education with the DRE by establishing goals and policies that guide programs.

Section 4 The commission shall have an interdependent relationship with the school board and shall have the role of coordinating communication and planning for all educational programs. The following areas shall be coordinated between the two bodies: 1) religious education philosophy and curriculum, 2) catechist formation and certification, 3) sacramental preparation, and 4) financial support of all educational programs. Any policy originating in either the religious education commission or the school board that effects people served by the other must be agreed to by both bodies.

Section 5 The commission shall establish a relationship of communication and cooperation with other parish committees, especially with the liturgy and finance committees.

Section 6 The commission shall consult the general parish to determine needs, using this input in developing goals. The commission shall give careful consideration to questions parishioners bring to it.

Section 7 The commission shall keep informed of and adhere to all policies of the (Arch)diocesan Pastoral Council, (Arch)diocesan Board of Education and (Arch)diocesan Office of Religious Education.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 At-large members of the commission shall consist of persons who are interested in religious education and have some skill

in an area such as planning, marketing, finances, or represent a specific interest group, or geographic area of the parish.

Section 2 Ex-officio members of the commission shall include the DRE, principal (or other representative of an inter-parochial school), and the pastor or his delegate.

Section 3 The commission shall consist of _____(from seven to twelve) members from the above two categories.

ARTICLE V - SELECTION AND TERM OF MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 At-large members shall be chosen by the commission from among those whose names have been approved by the pastor and DRE and have an understanding of the role and responsibilities of the commission.

Section 2 At-large members shall serve for a term of two (or three) years. Members may not serve more than two terms consecutively.

Section 3 All terms of membership shall begin on July 1 and end on June 30. Vacancies shall be filled by the commission for the remainder of the term vacated.

ARTICLE VI - OFFICERS

Section 1 The officers of the commission shall include chairperson, vice-chairperson, and secretary. They shall be chosen by the at-large members of the commission.

Section 2 The term of office for commission officers shall begin when they are chosen and end with the selection of successors.

Section 3 The duties of the commission officers shall be as follows:
Chairperson Shall preside at all meetings. Qualities and skills the committee shall consider in the selection are: strong faith, commitment to the church, leadership and organizational abilities, vision, initiative, facility in conducting meetings, an understanding of the educational mission and situation of the parish, the ability to work effectively with a broad range of persons and groups, and a willingness to assume the position and carry out its responsibilities.
Vice-Chairperson Shall preside in the absence of the chairperson and shall succeed to the office of chairperson in case of resignation or disqualification.
Secretary Shall be responsible for keeping minutes of meetings; for forwarding the minutes to each commission member; for notifying each commission member about the agenda for the next meeting; for all correspondence; and for providing necessary communications to (Arch)diocesan offices.

ARTICLE VII - COMMITTEES

Section 1 Standing and special committees shall be established by the action and approval of the commission.

ARTICLE VIII - MEETINGS

Section 1 Meetings of the commission shall be held monthly, according to a schedule that provides coordination with the meetings of the pastoral council. Special meetings may be called by the pastor or the chairperson. Special meetings may be requested by the DRE and shall be called by the chairperson upon written request of one-third of the commission members. Written notice must be postmarked at least five days prior to the special meeting date.

Section 2 All meetings shall be open to the public. However, portions of meetings dealing with personnel matters shall be "closed" to the public.

Section 3 The order of business shall be determined by the commission. Proposals by any parishioner may be submitted to the chairperson or DRE at least two weeks in advance of the regular commission meeting. Members shall receive the meeting agenda five days before the meeting.

ARTICLE IX - QUORUM

Section 1 A simple majority of the members of the commission constitutes a quorum for each meeting.

ARTICLE X - DECISION-MAKING

Section 1 The decision-making process of the commission shall be consensus.

Section 2 If consensus cannot be reached by the commission, the following voting procedures shall be followed:

a. Each elected member of the commission shall be entitled to one vote.
b. Actions of the commission require a two-thirds majority vote if a vote is necessary.

Section 3 All decisions and actions of the commission must be approved by the pastor.

a. The pastor's approval will automatically be presumed upon his knowledge of said decisions or actions unless otherwise indicated to the commission within thirty (30) days.
b. A record of the pastor's approval must be inserted in the minutes.
c. Upon explaining his reasons, the pastor will recommend that the decision be reconsidered. Any appeal of the

action of the pastor shall be made to the dean upon consensus of the membership of the commission.

ARTICLE XI - CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Section 1 The constitution may be amended by the members of the commission with the approval of the pastor and the pastoral council. Commission members must receive a written copy of proposed constitutional amendments two months before the date for the decision to amend.

Appendix B

Sample guidelines for a religious education committee *of a parish pastoral council, in a parish with a separate school board. The committee is advisory to the director or coordinator of religious education. The operating procedures are based on Vision to Reality, Handbook for Religious Education Committees, Department of Catholic Education Ministries, Archdiocese of Baltimore.*

GUIDELINES FOR A PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMITTEE

PREAMBLE

The Catholic community of the parish of _____, committed to the catechetical principle that "the entire community is responsible for catechesis," as expressed in the document, *A Vision for the Catechetical Ministry: An Instrument for Diocesan and Parish Planning*, establishes these guidelines.

ARTICLE I - NAME

Section 1 The name of this body shall be the Religious Education Committee of the Parish of _____, hereinafter referred to as the Committee.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Section 1 The pastor and parish pastoral council establish this committee as a standing committee of the parish pastoral council to assist the council in addressing religious education matters. It also serves as an advisory body to the director (or coordinator) of religious education (hereinafter referred to as the DRE).

Section 2 The responsibilities of the committee are to help shape and foster the long-range development of the parish's religious education efforts, in accord with the vision and mission of the parish; assist the pastor, pastoral council and DRE in articulating and developing the educational mission of the parish; develop policies and budget for religious education; assist in the hiring of the DRE; promote communication and coordination among the various components of religious

education and with the school board and other parish bodies; and report to the pastoral council on the status of religious education in the parish.

Section 3 The areas of responsibility are: catechist/teacher formation; initiation of adults and children; adult faith enrichment; youth and elementary catechesis; early childhood catechesis; Catholic school (promoting the school as an integral component of the parish religious education ministry and including the school in its religious education planning, budgeting and policy development); family-oriented programs; and religious education for those with disabilities.

ARTICLE III - RELATIONSHIPS

Section 1 The committee assists the pastor with religious education by carrying out its responsibilities as indicated above.

Section 2 The committee is a standing committee of the pastoral council and researches questions regarding religious education, submitting recommendations for policy to the council.

Section 3 The committee gives feedback and recommendations to the DRE regarding concerns she/he has raised, participates in the evaluation of the DRE, and gives input in hiring a new DRE.

Section 4 The committee has a relationship of interdependence with the school board. The committee has the role of coordinating communication and planning for all religious educational programs. The following areas are coordinated between the two groups:

1) religious education philosophy and curriculum,
2) catechist formation and certification,
3) sacramental preparation, and
4) financial support of all educational programs. Items brought to the pastoral council regarding the school are also brought to the committee for its recommendations.

Section 5 The relationship to other parish committees is one of effective communication and cooperation, especially with the liturgy, social action and finance committees.

Section 6 In the process of determining its goals the committee consults the general parish membership to determine needs. The committee then develops its goals in the light of the church's mission, catechetical documents and priorities, and the needs identified through consultation with the parish. The committee also gives careful consideration to questions parishioners bring to the committee or to the pastoral council.

Section 7 The committee shall keep informed of and adhere to all policies of the (Arch)diocesan Pastoral Council, (Arch)diocesan Board of Education and (Arch)diocesan Office of Religious Education.

ARTICLE IV - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Program representatives, who may be on sub-committees or the main committee, comprise one category of members.

Section 2 At-large members who are interested in religious education and have some skill in an area such as planning, marketing, finances or represent a specific interest group or geographic area, comprise a second category of members.

Section 3 Parish staff, including the DRE, principal (or other representative of an inter-parochial school), and pastor or his delegate constitute the third category of members.

Section 4 The committee shall consist of (from seven to twelve) members from the above three categories.

ARTICLE V - SELECTION AND TERM OF MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Program representatives are chosen from the programs in which they are involved and at-large members are appointed by the DRE and pastor from a list collected from several sources.

Section 2 Program representatives may remain on the committee as long as they are involved in the programs they represent; at-large members serve for a term of two years which may be renewed once.

Section 3 All terms of membership begin on July 1 and end on June 30.

ARTICLE VI - CHAIRPERSON

Section 1 The chairperson is elected from among the members of the committee. Qualities and skills the committee considers in its selection are: strong faith, commitment to the church, leadership and organizational abilities, vision, initiative, facility in conducting meetings, an understanding of the educational mission and situation of the parish, the ability to work effectively with a broad range of persons and groups, and a willingness to assume the position and carry out its responsibilities.

ARTICLE VII - MEETINGS

Section 1 Regular meetings shall be held monthly on a schedule that provides coordination with the pastoral council meeting schedule. Special meetings may be called by the chairperson

or DRE. Members shall be notified five days in advance of a special meeting.

Section 2 Members shall receive an agenda, along with minutes or a summary of the previous meeting, five days prior to the meeting. An official record of each meeting shall be kept on parish property as a resource for the pastoral council and other staff members.

Section 3 A well-planned prayer experience shall be a part of each meeting. Each meeting shall also include an opportunity for study, in-service or updating about educational issues or developments, or other items for the development of the committee as a group.

ARTICLE VIII - DECISION-MAKING

Section 1 The decision-making process of the committee for its recommendations to the pastoral council and DRE shall ordinarily be consensus. If consensus cannot be reached, action may be taken based on a two-thirds majority.

ARTICLE IX - CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Section 1 These guidelines may be amended by the pastoral council, based on a recommendation by the committee and the approval of the DRE and pastor.

Appendix C

Sample parish constitution for a Total Catholic Education board/commission *(or religious education commission in a parish without a school), based on the model constitution for boards of education, Archdiocese of Indianapolis.*

CONSTITUTION FOR PARISH BOARD OF TOTAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION

PREAMBLE

The (arch)diocese of _____ through the church community of the Parish of _____committed to Total Catholic Education as expressed in the United States Bishops' Pastoral Message on Catholic Education, *To Teach as Jesus Did*, and acting by the principle of "shared responsibility," establishes this constitution.

ARTICLE I - NAME

Section 1 The name of this body shall be the Board of Total Catholic Education of the Parish of _____, hereinafter referred to as the board.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE AND FUNCTION

Section 1 Sharing responsibility with the (arch)bishop (and the dean), the pastor and the parish pastoral council establish the board as the policy-making body in matters of Total Catholic Education for the Parish of _____. Board policy and decisions shall be binding throughout the parish upon approval by the pastor. Any appeal of the action of the pastor shall be made to the dean by a vote of two-thirds of the membership of the board.

Sectiion 2 The board shall be responsible to the pastor and the parish pastoral council for achieving (arch)diocesan, (deanery), and parish goals for education; for review and approval of the parish budget for education; and for reporting on the status of Total Catholic Education in the parish. The board shall also be responsible for directing the implementation of (arch)diocesan (and deanery) educational policy in the parish.

Section 3 The function of the board is to determine objectives for Total

Catholic Education in accord with (arch)diocesan, (deanery) and parish goals for education; to formulate policy that will guide the administrative officer in fulfilling board objectives; to review the rules and decisions made by the administrative officer in implementing board policy; and to evaluate the effectiveness of board policy in achieving board objectives.

Section 4 The board shall establish the necessary means and instruments to communicate board policy and decisions to the parish community.

Section 5 The principle of subsidiarity shall prevail in the relationship between the board and the (arch)diocesean (and deanery) boards.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 The pastor of the parish shall be the chairman of the board.

Section 2 Five (seven or nine) persons elected by the parishioners of the parish shall be the voting members of the board.

Section 3 Each member of the board shall be a Catholic and a registered parishioner, assigned priest, or parish minister in the Parish of _____.

ARTICLE IV - ELECTION AND TERMS OF OFFICE

Section 1 The board shall establish an election schedule that will provide for the election of approximately one-third of the members of the board each year.

Section 2 All board members shall serve for a term of three years. Members may not serve more than two terms consecutively. All terms of office for board members begin on July 1 and end on June 30.

Section 3 Vacancies shall be filled by the board for the remainder of the term vacated.

ARTICLE V - OFFICERS

Section 1 The officers of the board shall include president, vice-president and secretary. They shall be chosen by the elected members of the board.

Section 2 The term of office for board officers shall begin when they are chosen and end with the choosing of successors.

Section 3 The duties of the board officers shall be as follows:
President Shall preside at all meetings.
Vice-President Shall preside in the absence of the president

and shall succeed to the office of president in case of resignation or disqualification.

Secretary Shall be responsible for keeping minutes of meetings; for forwarding the minutes to each board member; for notifying each board member about the agenda for the next board meeting; for all correspondence; and for providing necessary communications to (arch)diocesan (and deanery) board(s).

Section 4 The board shall appoint an administrative officer who shall be responsible to the board for implementation of board policy.[1]

ARTICLE VI - COMMITTEES

Section 1 The members of the executive committee shall be the elected officers of the board and the administrative officer.

Section 2 Standing and special committees shall be established by the action and approval of the board.

ARTICLE VII - MEETINGS

Section 1 Regular meetings of the board shall be held according to a schedule that provides coordination with the meetings of the (arch)diocesan (and deanery) board(s). Special meetings may be called by the chairperson or the president. Special meetings may be requested by the administrative officer and shall be called by the president upon written request of one-third of the board members. Written notice must be postmarked at least five days prior to the special meeting date.

Section 2 All meetings shall be open to the public. However, portions of meetings dealing with personnel matters shall be closed to the public.

Section 3 The order of business shall be determined by the executive committee. Proposals by any parishioner may be submitted to the executive committee at least two weeks in advance of the regular board meeting. Members shall receive the meeting agenda five days before the meeting.

ARTICLE VIII - QUORUM

Section 1 A simple majority of the voting members of the board constitutes a quorum for each meeting.

ARTICLE IX - DECISION MAKING

Section 1 The decision making process of the board shall be consensus.

Section 2 If consensus cannot be reached by the board, the following voting procedures shall be followed:

a. Each elected member of the board shall be entitled to one vote.
b. Actions of the board require a two-thirds majority vote if a vote is necessary.

Section 3 All decisions and actions of the board must be approved by the pastor.
a. The pastor's approval will automatically be presumed upon his knowledge of said decisions or actions unless otherwise indicated to the board within thirty days.
b. A record of the pastor's approval must be inserted in the minutes.
c. Withholding approval would involve the following:
   1. Faith or morals
   2. General church law
   3. (Arch)diocesan policy as established by the (arch)bishop and the (arch)diocesan board of education or other duly recognized boards and commissions with which he shares his responsibility
   4. The pastoral and administrative needs of the parishioners.
   5. The general good order of the parish.
d. Upon explaining his reasons, the pastor will recommend that the decision be reconsidered.

ARTICLE X - CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS

Section 1 The constitution may be amended by the the members of the board. Board members must receive a written copy of proposed constitutional amendments two months before the date for the decision to amend.

[1]This person would normally be the director/coordinator of religious education or the school principal.

Appendix D

***Sample constitution for a parish board of education**, based on the model constitution used by the Diocese of Des Moines.*

CONSTITUTION FOR PARISH BOARD OF EDUCATION

ARTICLE I - TITLE

The name of this body shall be the _____Parish Board of Education.

ARTICLE II - NATURE AND FUNCTION

Section 1 This board is a governing body operating educational programs at (Parish), (City), subject to provisions of canon law, regulations that proceed from the diocesan board of education as well as the Department of Education for the State of Iowa and subject to the laws of Iowa.

Section 2 The board shall be responsible for all aspects of formal educational programs in the primary areas of catechesis: catechetical programs for children, youth ministry and the Catholic school.

Section 3 The board shall effectively implement at the parish level the policies of the diocesan board of education and the policies of the parish board.

Section 4 The board is the voice of the parish community in educational planning, goal setting and policy development in accord with the intent and spirit of the diocesan board.

Section 5 The board shall have as an integral part of all its educational programs the four tasks of catechesis: a) to proclaim Christ's message; b) to develop community; c) to lead people to worship; and d) to motivate to service of others.

Section 6 Specific duties and functions include the following:

a. Coordinate parish educational programs and activities;
b Build understanding and support for Catholic education in all its forms;
c Develop the educational budget in collaboration with the parish finance council and the administrators, in accord

with the diocesan guidelines and board procedures;

d. Adopt and oversee the implementation of the annual educational budget;
e. Retain personnel according to established policies of diocesan and the parish board;
f. Work with the parish buildings and grounds committee
   - in planning, operating and maintaining facilities
   - in planning and building new educational facilities;
g. Serve as a liaison body with public authority as appropriate;
h. Evaluate periodically
   - effectiveness of the board policies
   - the accomplishment of goals and objectives
   - the effectiveness of internal functioning as a board of education
   - all programs that the board governs.

ARTICLE III - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 Members of the parish board of education shall be the pastor (ex officio) and nine elected representatives.

Section 2 Members of the board shall be elected for a term of three years. A board member, having served two full terms, may again be a candidate for board membership after a lapse of at least one year.

Section 3 A member of the board who is absent from two consecutive regular scheduled board meetings shall, unless excused by the president, cease to be a member. If a member is unable to serve the full term, a vacancy is created. The vacancy shall be filled as stated in the bylaws.

A member of the board may be removed for cause only by the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the voting members of the board. Any action to remove a board member shall be conducted by secret ballot.

Section 4 Election of new members shall be held annually, according to the procedures specified in the bylaws. New members take office at the first meeting of the board of the new fiscal year.

Vacancies on the board shall be filled by appointment by the board as stated in the bylaws.

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

Section 1 The officers of the board shall consist of president, vice-president, secretary and treasurer. They shall be elected annually by board members (as stated in the bylaws). Officers assume their responsibilities at the first meeting of

the board of the new fiscal year.

Section 2 All members of the board with at least one year of their term remaining are eligible for any office with the exception of the pastor who is ineligible to hold any office on the board.

Section 3 The duties of the officers shall be stated in the bylaws.

ARTICLE V - MEETINGS

Section 1 The board shall meet regularly at a time and place specified in the standing rules. Special meetings may be called by the president or pastor as needed, or by a majority of the members.

Section 2 A quorum, a majority of the entire board, is necessary for the transaction of business at meetings; a majority vote of those present shall be sufficient for any decision or election. Proxy voting is never permissible.

Section 3 All meetings of the board are open unless designated as being executive. Decisions made in executive sessions must be presented and voted on at open sessions before becoming effective. Only board members should attend executive sessions. The board may extend, through the president, an invitation to other persons when circumstances warrant inclusion of non-board members.

Section 4 A written record of all acts of the board, maintained by the secretary, shall be preserved in the parish office.

The DRE or principal acts as executive/administrative officer of the board. The agenda is prepared by the board president, DRE and principal. The administrators are accountable to the board for accomplishing goals and objectives, fulfilling policies and administering effective programs.

ARTICLE VI - CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

Section 1 As a Christian community, the board will endeavor to arrive at consensus in its deliberations. Formal decision making will utilize parliamentary procedure as outlined in Robert's Rules of Order or another procedure of the board's choice.

Section 2 The ordinary order of meeting shall be as stated in the bylaws.

ARTICLE VII - APPROVAL

This constitution must have the approval of the diocesan board of education.

ARTICLE VIII - AMENDMENTS

Section 1 This constitution, excepting required components, may be amended, substituted or repealed in whole or in part only by two-thirds vote by ALL members of the board of education at a special meeting called for such purpose. Notice of said special meeting shall be given in writing to all members of the board at least 20 days before said special meeting. Notice shall be given to the parish at least 10 days prior to said special meeting. Notice shall state the proposed action. All revisions of the constitution shall be submitted to the diocesan board of education for final approval.

Section 2 Amendments must be presented to the board at least one meeting prior to voting on such.

ARTICLE IX - BYLAWS

Section 1 Bylaws in accord with this constitution may be developed to further specify the internal operation of the board.

Section 2 Bylaws may be developed and amended by a vote of one more than a simple majority at any regular meeting with a quorum present.

Section 3 Bylaws and/or amendments to bylaws must be presented at least one meeting prior to voting on such.

ARTICLE X - STANDING RULES

Section 1 Standing rules are guidelines related to the details of the administration of the board.

Section 2 Standing rules may be adopted and amended by a simple majority vote at any regular meeting of the board without previous notice.

OFFICIAL SIGNATURES

_____

Pastor

_____

President of Parish Board of Education

_____

Vice-President of Parish Board of Education

_____

Secretary of Parish Board of Education

_____

Treasurer of Parish Board of Education

Dated: _____

APPROVAL

This constitution is approved by the diocesan board of education.

_____

Chairperson of the Diocesan Board of Education

Dated: _____

_____

Bishop

Dated: _____

Appendix E

MODEL MONTHLY CALENDAR FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION COMMISSION/COMMITTEE

Month	Item	Executive Committee (Officers & DRE)	Commission (at the meeting) and DRE
July	Annual Report	Discusses format and content of annual budget report. *Agenda: Old Business for Action*	Commission reviews and approves annual report for submission to pastoral council and parish in August.
	Catechetical Sunday	Prepares committee charge to plan celebration, including tasks and timeline. *Agenda: New Business*	DRE assists Catechetical Sunday Committee with resources and information on previous celebrations.
	Election of Officers	Prepares procedure and materials for election. *Agenda: Old Business for Action*	Outgoing chairperson conducts July meeting.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	(DRE's report provides updates on implementation of commission goals and policies each month. Each month also focuses on a particular area of responsibility.) Report informs commission of staffing needs and procedures to fill openings. Asks for suggestions of names where needed.
August (more to follow)	Annual Report	Chairperson presents annual report to pastoral council. Executive Committee determines format for presenting report to parish.	
	Catechetical Sunday	*Agenda: Old Business for Action*	Commission approves plans for celebration of Catechetical Sunday.
	Installation of Officers and New Members	Reviews installation ceremony and makes arrangements for social after the meeting.	Commission members participate in ceremony as assigned.

Month	Item	Executive Committee (Officers & DRE)	Commission (at the meeting) and DRE
August (cont.)	Review commission calendar	Prepares calendar for the fiscal year. *Agenda: New Business* (Special meetings, retreats, executive committee meetings are included as well as regularly scheduled meetings.)	Executive committee presents calendar for review.
	Standing Committees	Decides on and obtains consent of members to chair the following committees: formation, planning, budget, etc., writes up charges (job descriptions) for each committee, including recruitment of additional members from the parish, tasks and dates when interim and final reports are due. *Agenda: New Business*	Commission approves committee charges. Members agree to appointments.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	The report briefly explains ongoing and new programs and mentions programs that are being discontinued.
September	Annual Report	*Agenda: Chairperson's Report*	Chairperson describes pastoral council's reaction to annual report. Any further action needed based on the discussion is referred to executive committee for future agendas.
	Pastor's Approval of Actions of Commission	*Agenda: New Business*	Chairperson and DRE describe to new members the process for pastor's approval of goals, policies and other actions of the commission.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report reviews catechist formation process and collective status of certification of parish catechists.
October (more to follow)	Review of Budget	Handled by the budget committee chairperson. *Agenda: Committee Reports*	DRE serves as a resource to the budget committee.

Month	Item	Executive Committee (Officers & DRE)	Commission (at the meeting) and DRE
October (cont.)	Review of Commission Policy Manual	Executive committee appoints a committee to review policy manual. A charge is written to define committee's task and expected timeline. *Agenda: New Business*	Commission approves the policy review committee's charge.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report includes a review of the Adult Education Program, plans for Advent program and planning for Christmas or mid-winter party for program leaders, catechists and teachers.
November	Review of Commission Policy Manual	*Agenda: Committee Reports*	DRE, with the committee, makes recommendations to commission on policies which need revision or revoking.
	DRE Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report updates commission on catechumenate and discusses plans for implementation of the RCIA.
December	Evaluation of commission meetings	Executive committee decides on best method of evaluating commission meetings. *Agenda: New Business*	Evaluation instruments are distributed to commission members at the meeting. Members are asked to complete during the meeting or to return the instrument prior to the next executive committee meeting.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report includes general information from catechist evaluations and plans for ongoing catechist formation and support.
January (more to follow)	Mid-Year Progress Report on Current Year's Objectives	Executive committee reminds planning committee that a mid-year report is due and that next month their recommendations for next year's objectives are due. *Agenda: Committee Reports*	The planning committee submits a mid-year report on commission's goals for religious education. DRE provides information and guidance to the committees.

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Month	Item	Executive Committee (Officers & DRE)	Commission (at the meeting) and DRE
January (cont.)	Review of Budget	*Agenda: Committee Reports*	Report includes a mid-year review of projected and actual expenses and income. DRE acts as a resource to this committee.
	Review of Evaluation of Commission Meetings	Executive committee prepares suggestions for dealing with areas that need improvement. *Agenda: Old Business*	Commissions discusses evaluation findings and decides on changes needed in operating procedures.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report focuses on implementation of sacramental preparation programs; provides information on plans for Lenten programs.
February	Approval of Next Year's Objectives	*Agenda: Old Business for Action*	Commission discusses and approves objectives for next year. After approval, DRE writes action plans and incorporates resources needed in budget proposal.
	Development of Next Year's Budget	Executive committee reminds budget committee of its charge to have the budget prepared for March meeting. *Agenda: New Business*	DRE prepares figures for projected expenses and works with budget committee to develop next year's budget.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report includes brief verbal status report from program representatives.
March (more to follow)	Recruitment of New Members	Executive committee appoints recruitment committee with charge to: 1.) review qualifications and particular skills and perspectives needed in new members, 2.) plan and carry out orientation for prospective members and in-service for new members, 3.) carry out commission's role in choosing new members. *Agenda: New Business*	Commission discusses qualities, skills and perspectives desired in new members. DRE works with the recruitment committee.

Month	Item	Executive Committee (Officers & DRE)	Commission (at the meeting) and DRE
March (cont.)	Approval of Next Year's Budget	Budget committee makes presentation of budget. *Agenda: New Business for Action*	Commission receives recommendations of budget committee. Commission finalizes and approves budget to be presented to parish finance committee or pastoral council.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	DRE describes preliminary plans for summer bible school and for program designs based on objectives for next year.
April	Quarterly Budget Report	*Agenda: Committee Report*	Budget committee provides third quarter report. DRE provides information, especially on significant variances.
	Presentation of Commission Budget	Chairperson makes presentation of commission budget to pastoral council and seeks approval at May pastoral council meeting.	
	Publicity for Next Year's Programs	Executive committee prepares suggestions to inform parish and advertise upcoming programs and registration procedures. *Agenda: New Business*	Commission discusses recommendations and determines role each one will take in publicizing upcoming programs.
	Calendar of Events	Executive committee develops calendar of major events for commission and programs, based on preliminary planning by staff for inclusion in parish calendar.	DRE and staff prepare schedule of major program events for inclusion in calendar.
	Communication with Other Leadership Groups	Executive committee makes recommendations for ways of strengthening relationships with pastoral council and committees and appropriate ecumenical and community groups where needed. *Agenda: New Business*	Commission discusses and decides on appropriate means it will take for strengthening relationships.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report focuses on sacramental preparation, summer bible school, and recruitment and training for new catechists.

Month	Item	Executive Committee (Officers & DRE)	Commission (at the meeting) and DRE
May	Selection of New Members	Executive committee reminds recruitment committee of responsibility to provide orientation for prospective members, and gives any guidance necessary based on last year's experience. *Agenda: Committee Reports*	Recruitment committee reports on orientation of prospective members and selection process for new members. Commission and pastor approve selection according to local constitution. Committee also reports on plans for in-service for new members. DRE assists in orientation and in-service.
	Evaluation of Commission Meetings	Executive committee decides on best way to evaluate meetings. *Agenda: New Business*	Commission members participate in evaluation.
	Appreciation Picnic	Executive committee sets up committee for picnic to express appreciation for program leaders, catechists, school teachers, aides, etc.	Commission members decide on what aspect of the picnic they will work.
	DRE's Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report includes registration procedures, preliminary figures, update on personnel recruitment and catechist training.
June (more to follow)	Training for New Members	Invite new members to June meeting to observe. Reserve time at end of meeting to respond to questions.	Commission members introduce themselves and indicate responsibilities they have assumed, e.g., committees, officers, etc. Recruitment committee will explain assistance and training for new members that will be provided by commission during their first year. New members are provided with a packet of information including Constitution; Mission Statement; goals; policies; roster of members' names, addresses, phone numbers and terms of office; and minutes from the last year's meetings.

Month	Item	Executive Committee (Officers & DRE)	Commission (at the meeting) and DRE
June (cont.)	Review of Commission Evaluation	*Agenda: Old Business*	Commission discusses evaluation findings and decides on changes needed. Old and new executive committees will meet to plan how to incorporate changes into operating procedures.
	Year-end Review of Current Year's Goals and Objectives	Planning committee and DRE prepare final report to be submitted for Commission's approval in June and pastoral council's approval in July. *Agenda: New Business for Action*	Commission reviews report, noting areas of strengths and challenges for inclusion in report to pastoral council, then approves report.
	Year-end Social	Executive committee plans social to welcome new members, thank those who are leaving and celebrate year just completed.	
	DRE Report	*Agenda: DRE Report*	Report includes preliminary reports from program representatives, identifying strengths and areas where change is needed based on evaluation of programs from staff and participants.

Appendix F

FORM FOR ADMINISTRATOR'S MONTHLY
COMMISSION/COMMITTEE REPORT

DRE reports regularly on the progress on implementation of commission/committee goals and policies as well as significant programs and activities.

Area I: Commission/Committee Goals

A. Current Year Objective #1

Actions Taken:

On Schedule _____

Behind Schedule _____

Comments:

B. Current Year Objective #2

Actions Taken:

On Schedule _____

Behind Schedule _____

Comments:

C. Current Year Objective #3

Actions Taken:

On Schedule _____

Behind Schedule _____

Comments:

Area II: Commission/Committee Policies

Administrative Rules Implemented

Area III: Significant Programs and Activities

Area IV: Other Information

Appendix G

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Publications

Board of Education Guide (Revised 1991) Archdiocese of Indianapolis, Office of Catholic Education, P.O. Box 1410, 1400 North Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN 46206; (317) 236-1430.

CACE/NABE Governance Task Force: *A Primer on Educational Governance in the Catholic Church*
Of particular interest is Chapter Four, "Models of Governance," which provides several models for single and multiple parish programs. National Catholic Educational Association Publications, Washington, DC, 1987.

Catholic Education: Transforming the World, A Pastor's Viewpoint by G. Basil Hume, OSB. Addresses various aspects of religious education, and challenges the reader to look and act upon a religious education that "not only feeds minds but enlivens, develops and sustains the human spirit in its search for God." National Catholic Educational Association Publications, Washington, DC, 1990.

Collaborative Ministry: Skills and Guidelines by Loughlan Sofield, ST. Ave Maria Press, 1987.

Dimensions of Justice and Peace in Religious Education by Sr. Loretta Carey. This booklet presents the central concepts and processes for effective catechesis of justice and peace within parish religious education programs. National Catholic Educational Association Publications, Washington, DC, 1989.

Grace Under Pressure: What Gives Life to American Priests. A Study of Effective Priests Ordained Ten to Thirty Years by Rev. James Walsh. National Catholic Educational Association, 1995.

Guidelines for Parish Boards of Education Diocese of Galveston-Houston, Continuing Christian Education Office, 2403 East Holcombe Blvd., Houston, TX 77021; (713) 741-8730.

On The Way in Parish Catechesis This workbook offers a process to help catechetical leaders reflect on their experience and determine future

direction of catechesis in the United States. National Catholic Educational Association Publications, Washington, DC, 1986.

A Primer on Law for DREs and Youth Ministers by Sr. Mary Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, JD, Ph.D. Orients DREs and youth ministers to the complexity of the law; addresses critical areas which ministers need to face, such as (1) civil law considerations for parish programs, (2) tort law, (3) canon law and governance, and (4) directors, staff, and volunteers. National Catholic Educational Association Publications, Washington, DC, 1992.

Toward Effective Parish Religious Education: A Process for Applying the National Study to Parish Programs by Mrs. Mary D'Amato and Rev. Louis R. Piermarine. This packet contains the ingredients for a self-evaluation and planning process to analyze a parish program's strengths and weaknesses, and target areas for future development. It contains detailed outlines for parish meetings for this task and gives all the materials needed. National Catholic Educational Association Publications, Washington, DC, 1987.

Transforming Church Boards into Communities of Spiritual Leaders by Charles M. Olsen. The Alban Institute, Bethesda, MD, 1995.

Vision for the Catechetical Ministry: An Instrument for Diocesan and Parish Planning National Catholic Educational Association Publications, Washington, DC, 1985.

Vision to Reality: Handbook For Religious Education Committees (Second Edition, 1994) Archdiocese of Baltimore, Department of Catholic Education Ministries, 320 Cathedral Street, Baltimore, MD 21201; (410) 547-5383.

Who Are My Sisters and Brothers? A Catholic Educational Guide for Understanding and Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees by the Office for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Refugees, Migrants and Refugees Services, USCC, and the Department of Education, USCC, in collaboration with National Catholic Educational Association, National Conference for Catechetical Leadership, National Conference for Interracial Justice, and the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry, Inc. This guide can be used for Catholic schools (K-12), religious education programs (K-12), youth retreats, teacher/catechist in-service and adult sessions. United States Catholic Conference, 1996.

Videos

A Sense of Justice: Catholic Education, The Law and You
Narrated by Sr. Angela Shaughnessy, SCN, JD, Ph.D.
Part 1: Introduction (18 minutes)
Part 2: Schools (27 minutes)
Part 3: Religious Education (23 minutes)
More than ever before, Catholic education board/commission/council members need to know their legal responsibilities. Only then can they govern effectively, making sound policy for the educational programs they serve. The intent of this video series is to make members aware of legal basics which can help them avoid legal entanglements. National Catholic Educational Association, Washington, DC, 1994.

Appendix H

VISION OF A PARISH RELIGIOUS EDUCATION PROGRAM SERVING FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

We, the catechetical ministry of the parish...staff, catechists and parents...strive to teach the good news of Jesus Christ. We believe that, by using a holistic approach of instruction, celebration and service, the basis to foster mature faith in the Catholic tradition is established.

We commit all those in the catechetical ministry to a religious education program that will serve the youth of the parish in preschool to high school, with a focus on family-centered catechesis. This program will be implemented by trained volunteers, directed by a qualified staff and supported by parents.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
Preschool/Elementary/Junior High/Confirmation

Goal A

To insure that the tradition of the Catholic church is passed on in an organized, well-planned holistic manner, there will be:

1. A curriculum for preschool through high school students, outlined by staff coordinators and approved by the director of religious education.

   The curriculum will reflect the maturity of the learner, considering the spiritual and moral capabilities and will connect to the Sunday liturgies, whenever appropriate.

2. There will be well-planned lesson plans offered at every grade level for every lesson, developed by the staff coordinators and given to catechists for each grade level meeting.

3. There will be service projects offered for each grade level. They will provide:
   - Service as altar servers
   - Participation in the youth choir
   - Support for juvenile hall needs at Christmas and Easter
   - Support for parish service projects, such as the food pantry
   - Participation in catechist-initiated projects that have been approved by the DRE
   - Volunteer work in convalescent homes (parties and bingo)

- Participation in other projects deemed appropriate for youth, as organized by the youth coordinator

Goal B

To teach and celebrate paraliturgies and prayer services for all involved in the religious education program.

Goal C

To form and clarify the role, responsibilities and rewards of the catechetical leadership team. Members of this catechetical leadership team will be the steering committee serving catechists, parents and students and will be comprised of:

- Director of Religious Education
- Elementary Coordinator
- Junior High Coordinator
- Religious Education Office Staff
- Youth Minister Coordinator
- Parent representatives for elementary, junior high and confirmation
- Catechist representatives from elementary, junior high and confirmation
- Special Events Coordinator
- Liaison with parish school
- Representative of special religious education programs and RCIA adapted for children
- Pastor and priest associates

Goal D

To build community between parish school and religious education:

1. The special events chairperson, working with staff, will invite the school faculty to Catechetical Sunday Commissioning, Potluck, Christmas Party, Evening of Prayer, and diocesan events.

2. By September, the staff coordinators will make personal contact with the teachers in the parish school explaining the shared use of facilities.

3. All catechists will be instructed, prior to the first class, about the proper use of school classrooms.

4. In the fall, the Director of Religious Education will offer all religious education video resources to the school principal for faculty use, as needed.

Goal E

To recruit, train and support capable adults to be actively involved in the religious education program:

1. Using parent opportunity forms received during registration, follow up contact will be made by staff coordinators.

2. The Director of Religious Education will ask priests and the pastoral council for suggestions for potential catechists.

3. The Director of Religious Education and coordinators will offer in-service and orientation on "How To Begin in September."

4. Director of Religious Education, with staff coordinators, to offer at least three catechist in-service opportunities during the school year. Time and day to be determined by a survey of catechists to be given by Director of Religious Education, in the fall.

5. Staff and catechetical leaders encourage attendance at diocesan events relating to religious formation of catechists.

6. Staff coordinator to bring videos appropriate for catechists' spiritual and religious formation to grade level meeting, encouraging at-home study and prayer.

7. At the end of the school year, Director of Religious Education to ask the pastor to send thank you notes to all catechists, both returning and retiring.

8. Visit catechists in class/offer opportunities to visit other catechists. Staff coordinators will set a schedule and allow catechists to decide when the visit will take place. After the class visit, a personal evaluation will be given verbally.

9. Staff coordinators personally interview all prospective new catechists before discerning their role in the classroom. Using the team approach, the catechist will be prime teacher and one aide will co-teach, when appropriate.

Goal F

To communicate and involve families in the planning and policies of the parish religious education program:

1. Family ideas for Advent and Lent will be offered by Religious Education Office.

2. Religious education information calendar will be mailed to each family by religious education staff.

3. Family events to be planned at least once a year during classtime for all grades.

4. Special family events will be held: Reconciliation Celebrations, Lenten Soup Supper and Eucharist preparation, Retreat time and Family Class Masses.

5. Catechists will personally contact, at least twice a year by mail or phone, each child's family assigned to his/her class.

6. A telephone committee of parents for each class will be organized to communicate special events, service projects and class information.

7. By personal contact, phone or mail, staff coordinators will communicate to families that religious education continues after First Communion and Confirmation.

Goal G

To inform the parish community about the great job done by the parish religious education program.

1. Director of Religious Education will write monthly articles for parish newsletter.

2. Director of Religious Education will report regularly to pastoral council regarding successes in religious education.

3. Director of Religious Education and staff coordinators will write affirming bulletin notices regarding religious education activities.

4. Director of Religious Education will report successes to other parish organizations, when appropriate.

5. At Parent Team Meetings, staff coordinators will request members to affirm the religious education program to other parents at appropriate opportunities.

National Association of Boards of
Catholic Education of the
National Catholic Educational Association
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Washington, DC 20007
(202) 337-6232

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